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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7744th meeting
Monday, 25 July 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/631)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/631)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/631, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: Every time I have briefed the Council, I have described the horrors of a brutal conflict characterized by the complete failure to protect civilians, which has generated gargantuan levels of suffering for most civilians. Truth be told, words are not adequate to depict the grim and gruesome reality facing the people of Syria today. We have seen the hopes of ordinary Syrians for an end to their nightmare raised and then dashed time and again as the Government, non-State armed groups and terrorist groups have relentlessly continued on a military path that has further devastated cities, towns, communities and families. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recently said, "The number of war crimes already committed surpasses our worst nightmares".

The fighting and violence have escalated across several parts of the country over the last few weeks, resulting in widespread civilian deaths, injury and displacement. Strikes, by all sides, continue to be launched on and from heavily populated areas from the air and the ground without regard for civilian presence. Attacks on other civilian infrastructure remain an almost daily occurrence in some areas. A recent World Health Organization (WHO) report indicated that health care is attacked in Syria more than in any other place on Earth.

The undeniable fact is that today, in many places, civilians in Syria are as much at risk as they have ever been, owing to the parties' continued blatant disregard for international humanitarian law, whose primary and overarching principle, as advocated by but also supposedly enforced by the Security Council, is the obligation to protect civilians from the effects of armed conflict.

I am deeply alarmed by the disturbing developments in and around Aleppo city. Hundreds of mortars, missiles and projectiles were launched on both eastern and western Aleppo in past weeks, resulting in scores of deaths and hundreds of injuries. Since 7 July, civilian, humanitarian and commercial movements in and out of eastern Aleppo City have come to a halt. Castello Road, the last remaining access route in and out of the east of the city, as I alerted the Council in my two previous briefings, where an estimated 250,000 to 275,000 people reside, has now been cut off due to the fighting.

The United Nations and our partners prepositioned stocks in sad but all too real anticipation of such developments, and food in east Aleppo is expected to run out by the middle of next month. While medical supplies are available for a longer period, I am extremely worried about the continuing attacks on medical facilities in eastern Aleppo, such as that on a hospital in Alma'adi neighbourhood, which has now been hit three times in the last month alone.

Indeed, over the last 48 hours, we have received reports, which are in the process of being verified, of attacks on or near several facilities in Aleppo City and in the countryside. Such attacks have a devastating multiplier effect — not only killing people and destroying facilities, but leaving thousands unable to get even basic care at a time when they need it most.

I cannot stress enough how critical the situation is for those trapped in eastern Aleppo city. That population is at serious risk of besiegement as the fighting closes in and their access to basic necessities runs out. Our highest priority is to ensure access through both cross-line or cross-border operations, under the existing

resolutions of the Security Council, so that we can replenish stocks and ensure people's access to the basic necessities of life. The international community simply cannot let eastern Aleppo city become yet another, and by far the largest, besieged area. This is medieval and shameful. We must not allow this to happen, but the clock is ticking. I urgently call upon the parties and those with influence to act now to establish a weekly, 48-hour humanitarian pause for eastern Aleppo city so that the United Nations and partners have safe, regular and sustained access to the quarter of a million people trapped behind the front lines. This must be a full United Nations call — not just from me as the United Nations humanitarian chief — it must come from the Security Council.

I am equally alarmed by reports of deteriorating humanitarian conditions and urgent medical evacuation needs in Madaya, Fo'ah, Zabadani and Kefraya, where more than 62,000 people are and continue to be besieged. Despite the approvals granted by the Government of Syria over the past three months for the United Nations and humanitarian partners to provide assistance to besieged civilians in the four towns, the United Nations and partners have not been able to access the towns because of tension among parties to the agreement, heavy aerial bombardment in Idlib and shelling on Fo'ah and Kefraya. We should all remember the disturbing images of starving children in Madaya earlier this year, many of whom died even after aid was finally allowed in. Let me be clear: we will see such images again unless the parties enable immediate and unconditional humanitarian deliveries to the four towns. This is no hollow warning; this is highly likely to occur again unless the Council enforces access.

Urgent medical evacuations must also be immediately available where needed. The current tit-for-tat arrangement, which has led to children dying in one of the towns because there is no equally sick child in another location to evacuate at exactly the same time, should be a shameful blot on the conscience of the parties and those who support them. In any event, such a callous tit-for-tat arrangement is not in compliance with international humanitarian law. The only measure for humanitarian access and action is to meet needs, not reciprocity. I call on all parties to allow the sick and wounded to exit the four towns and all other besieged areas to get the medical care they need to survive, and put an end to the tit-for-tat approach. Medical evacuations are not a question of politics or military advantage, but of basic humanity.

I have highlighted Aleppo city and the four towns today, but members will find similar conditions in many more places: the tens of thousands trapped and exposed to fighting in Menbij with no humanitarian support; or the reports of dozens of civilians killed in strikes in Tokhar, in rural Aleppo; the continued bombardment of Douma, Darayya and Khan El-Shieh, in rural Damascus; and relentless attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant on the besieged parts of Deir ez-Zor city. I am also gravely concerned about the situation at the berm along the Jordanian border, where the number of people seeking shelter from the fighting inside Syria increased exponentially in recent months. The vast majority of those stranded are children, women and elderly people, as well as those in need of medical care, including hundreds of pregnant women. It is baking hot, totally arid — a no-man's land of a barely living hell.

The fact is that across Syria approximately 5.5 million people are in need in hard-to-reach and besieged areas with little physical protection and limited access to basic life-saving assistance. Of that number, some 590,000 people remain totally trapped in besieged areas. If I may, let me take a moment to describe what it is actually like to live in those areas.

Most of those people are completely desperate for an escape from the constant fighting, shelling and snipers that engulf their lives. Parents have no food for their near-starving children. Malnutrition is so severe that children die as a result. There is no running water or electricity. Prices for the little commodities that reach those areas are dozens of times higher than in neighbouring communities, and thus simply not affordable for those already reduced to nothing. They are places with little education, and where sexual violence, child recruitment and early marriage are commonplace. Imagine a place where a pregnant woman cannot give birth safely because she cannot receive the necessary painkillers or the care that is needed. They are places where those fortunate enough to find care all too often die in their beds when their medical facility is hit. And yes, in Syria, there are unspeakable sexual crimes against children — it is abhorrent and on our collective watch.

When you look beyond the numbers, Mr. President, that is the reality that people are facing in those areas

day in and day out. It is not the fighters or those at checkpoints who are suffering and dying in such ways. It is the civilian population, the most vulnerable, children, women, disabled persons and the elderly. Those are indisputable facts, and they speak for themselves. Surely none of us, no one here, is immune to those horrors, which constitute daily life for so many of our fellow human beings who just happen to have been Syrian in Syria when their world exploded around them over five years ago.

The life-or-death situation in many parts of the country is exactly why we press from every possible angle to get regular and sustained access to all besieged and hard-to-reach areas. It is true that some progress has been made this year. Overall, we have now reached over 1 million people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. We have reached each besieged area at least once this year, including 400,000 of the 590,000 people, including as well through ongoing airdrops to 110,000 people in Deir ez-Zor city. Significant progress was made on approvals by the Government of Syria for the July inter-agency convoy plan, with 34 out of 35 locations approved for convoys, including, for the first time, all requested besieged areas with the full package of assistance. Those breakthroughs, however incremental, are proof that, when there is enough political will, it is really possible to reach people in desperate need of life-saving assistance. I thank those with influence on the parties for bringing their weight to bear on the issue, especially recent initiatives by the United States and the Russian Federation, not least the Russian Federation's Ambassador and his team in Damascus.

At the same time, we have to recognize the enormous access challenges still in front of us. The escalation of fighting and insecurity continues to further constrain access. Beyond Aleppo and the four towns, we have seen that very clearly in July, as even with Government of Syria approvals we have been unable to reach many other locations, such as Darayya and Duma, due to bombing and shelling and fighting along key access roads. The United Nations and partner cross-border operations from Turkey and Jordan have also been affected by insecurity along border areas and key access routes, thus affecting our ability to reach tens of thousands of people.

Arbitrary restrictions and obstructions continue to limit or obstruct where we deliver aid, to whom and how often. Notwithstanding the high level of approvals for the July inter-agency convoy plan, the Syrian authorities only authorized us to deliver to 75 per cent of the population estimated by the United Nations to be in those areas. The team on the ground continues to press for the delivery of aid based on independent United Nations needs assessments, as called for by the Security Council in its resolutions

Even when approvals are granted and the large amount of paperwork is completed, permits given by the Government centrally do not always translate down to their security forces. In particular, despite repeated calls for the free passage of all medicines and surgical equipment in aid convoys, from the Council and others, medical and surgical items continue to be excluded or removed from midwifery kits, paediatric kits, and diarrheal-disease sets, depriving thousands of people each month — I repeat: midwifery kits, paediatric kits, and diarrheal-disease sets. This deliberate denial of essential medicine and surgical equipment undermines the very basis of humanitarian action. Meanwhile, some non-State armed groups have also attacked, threatened and refused to cooperate with humanitarian workers. And sustained United Nations access to areas under the control of ISIL, such as parts of the Raqqah and Deir ez-Zor governorates, remains extremely limited.

Throughout Syria, United Nations agencies and partners from non-governmental organizations continue their tireless efforts to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the Syrian population, often at great personal risk. We saw that first-hand on 29 June, when during a convoy to Irbin and Zamalka, one of the drivers of a supply truck was shot in the chest, and another round struck an armoured vehicle. I would like to recognize the bravery of those who risk their lives every time they cross conflict lines and borders or enter active conflict areas to provide much needed life-saving assistance to those in need and remind those who sometimes carp that gaining the Government of Syria's permission is the only way to mitigate these live and present mortal dangers to our brave United Nations colleagues and their partners, many of them local Syrians. Collectively, through these efforts, we are reaching millions of people per month through regular programming, cross-border and cross-line activities, as well as air operations. It is vital that all humanitarian organizations, personnel and other assets — wherever they are based, wherever they are operating, or however they deliver assistance in Syria — be provided all necessary protection by all

parties to the conflict, as afforded under international humanitarian law.

Let me be frank — we need to urgently regain the momentum on protection and access. The momentum created in the first half of the year and since the creation of the International Syria Support Group's humanitarian task force must be the platform for a step change in the protection and access situation for civilians into the second half of this year. That must include, first, a restoration and consolidation of the cessation of hostilities and an end to indiscriminate attacks that recklessly kill and injure civilians. It is well within the power of all parties and those who back them to minimize civilian casualties and avoid further crimes and atrocities. They must do so. Civilians and civilian infrastructure are not pawns to be sacrificed, but are specially protected under international law.

Secondly, it must include all necessary action from the parties and their supporters to ensure safe, sustained, unhindered and unconditional access. That must include humanitarian truces and pauses in the fighting, so that we can reach those civilians trapped behind the front lines and that they can reach life-saving services not available in their areas. Better still, of course, is for all the fighting to stop.

Thirdly, it must include an immediate end to the sieges that still collectively punish hundreds of thousands of civilians mercilessly. Anything less than the full lifting of the sieges will never be enough, and we cannot pretend otherwise.

I will close by repeating what I and my colleagues have said many times. The crisis must end with a political solution, not a military victory. But we should make no mistake as to the current humanitarian trajectory; despite some sentiment and even rhetoric within the international community, the available protection space is shrinking, humanitarian conditions are worsening and the level of despair is rising. Those cannot and must not become accepted trends to which the international community seemingly resigns itself as the search for a political solution continues. The international community has shown unity of purpose before and must show it again before it is too late and we face the prospect of losing another generation of Syrians to conflict and misery.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Sir, for agreeing to hold this meeting in open session today. Enough is enough. We need to break with tradition and have this debate in public because it is vital that the world hear the reality of life in Syria. I therefore thank Under-Secretary O'Brien for his sobering briefing.

It is also vital that the world hear each and every member of the Council respond to the horrors described today. We cannot hide away behind closed doors. We cannot stay silent in the face of such barbarism. Hundreds of civilians are being killed and injured in attacks from the air and ground. Hundreds of thousands more are now suffering in an ever-expanding humanitarian crisis. As we have just heard, eastern Aleppo city is now encircled by the regime. The Castillo road, a vital route for food, medicine and supplies, is cut off. Three hundred thousand people are now effectively besieged. Yet another humanitarian catastrophe awaits.

We have seen this before, and we know what happens next. Only six months ago, we held an emergency briefing on the siege of Madaya (see PV.7605). We all remember the pictures of emaciated children from that town — children like Olah, only 12-years-old, who died after the regime ignored requests to evacuate her. She starved to death. The Syrian American Medical Society reports that 64 others suffered the same horrific fate.

We owe it to Olah, her family and the people of Madaya to stop history repeating itself in Aleppo. There are 300,000 reasons why we cannot afford to fail, but we are running out of time. We welcome the foresight of the United Nations to preposition food supplies in the city, but those supplies will feed less than half the city's population and only for a month. Food prices are soaring, the price of flour has doubled, the price of vegetables has tripled and it is only going to get worse. We all know what is needed: sustained and unhindered humanitarian deliveries. All of us here today — the Council, the United Nations, the world outside the Chamber — must keep pressing for such access, both for Aleppo and all other destinations agreed in the July plan.

We support Under-Secretary O'Brien's call for a weekly 48-hour pause to allow aid into Aleppo, and I call upon all other Council members to express their support today. We again call on Russia to use its influence on the regime, not just to reopen the Castillo

road and other routes, but also to respect fully the cessation of hostilities, so that convoys can proceed securely and Syrians can live safely. Those are not unreasonable requests. They are not even new requests, and yet they have fallen on deaf ears time after time and week after week. Without sustained and unhindered land access, we must continue to push for air access, and we look to the World Food Programme and the United Nations for an update on their plans to request approval for such delivery.

So far this month, only two besieged places have been reached by the United Nations. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/631) explains that that is because of security concerns. That comes as no surprise, given the regime's military offensives. It is also because of administrative delays. I am sorry, but no person or child should ever face starvation because of an administrative delay. The Council should therefore be united in its condemnation of any effort to delay or restrict access. As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, granting access should never be conditional, dependent on political negotiations or used as a bargaining chip in talks.

As crucial as humanitarian access is for the people of Aleppo, Madaya and so many other places in Syria, it will count for very little if the bombs keep falling. I was e-mailed recently by Dr. Hatem, a Syrian paediatrician, who I have quoted in the Chamber before. He wrote to me:

> "There are close to 90,000 children in Aleppo. In front of each of them, now lies the siege and above them the threat of bombs".

What good is it to feed, to clothe, to heal someone only for them to die under the rubble of a bomb blast? In Daraya, over 700 barrel bombs fell in less than three weeks. That is on average 1 bomb every 40 minutes for 20 days. In Aleppo city, only this weekend, 6 medical facilities were attacked within the space of 24 hours. The only paediatric facility in east Aleppo was hit twice within 12 hours. These are just a handful of examples; there are many more. Such attacks are unconscionable. They are unjustifiable. And yet they are commonplace. Al-Assad's consistent disregard for the cessation of hostilities is an affront to the Security Council and to the International Syria Support Group.

In the coming weeks and days, therefore, it is not enough to grant unhindered access to all besieged areas. It is not enough to unblock Castello road. We need to see all of that and more, including a genuine recommitment to the cessation of hostilities, an end to the bombing of medical facilities and an end to attacks on civilians. That is the only way to save the people of Aleppo and the people of Syria. As Doctor Yahya of the Aleppo Children's Hospital told me by e-mail earlier today, if nothing is done, we are surely facing death.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Last February, the adoption of the cessation of hostilities agreement provided a spark of hope for a reduction in violence that would open the way to an emergence from the crisis and to the negotiation of a political transition in Syria. Two months later, at the end of April, the regime, supported by its allies, began its attack on Aleppo and extinguished that hope. At that time, France, together with the United Kingdom, took the initiative to bring the Security Council together on 4 May (see S/PV.7687) to denounce the tragic situation being faced by Aleppo and the hundreds of thousands of inhabitants who were still living there.

The regime, with the complicity of its allies, had just launched an offensive that sounded the death knell for a cessation of hostilities. The agreement on the cessation of hostilities, as we feared, was just a smoke screen to hide with the utmost cynicism an exclusively military strategy, which aimed, under the pretext of combating the Al-Nusra Front, to encircle all the areas held by the opposition. What the regime cannot control, it seeks to destroy. Hospitals were destroyed just yesterday in Aleppo, in total violation of international humanitarian law and resolution 2286 (2016), which we adopted by consensus a few weeks ago.

During this entire time, the regime has continued to violate Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and the most basic humanitarian principles. It has continued to attack civilian populations and non-terrorist armed groups. By observing and supporting the regime's attitude, some members of the Security Council are jeopardizing their responsibility and their credibility.

The brutality has continued to worsen in Aleppo city and province. After experiencing indiscriminate attacks and daily barrel bomb attacks, the city of Aleppo is now being besieged. The Castello road, which was the last accessible route to provide it with water, provisions and medicines, has been cut off by the regime's allied forces. In many respects Aleppo is for Syria what Sarajevo was for Bosnia. It is a crossroads

city, a martyred city. The symbolic crossroads city of Aleppo, which is thousands of years old and is part of humankind's heritage, is a place where many countries have clashed and intermingled, leaving profound and diverse imprints on the city — again, today is a martyred town. This symbol of civilization is now being subjected to a medieval type of siege. What a downfall and, frankly, what a disgrace that is.

There are still about 300,000 people living in besieged Aleppo, soon to be deprived of everything and at the mercy of the cruelty of the regime's militia. Therefore, I ask: Can the Security Council, 20 years after the siege of Sarajevo, passively accept the reprise of a war crime of such barbarous tactics? Those responsible for those crimes must not go unpunished.

The calendar provided for by resolution 2254 (2015) sets 1 August as the deadline for establishing a transitional authority with full executive powers. For the Security Council, respecting that deadline is a test of the real will of the regime and its supporters to reach a political solution.

At our most recent consultations, Special Envoy De Mistura collectively informed us of the fact that, without any progress in the cessation of hostilities and the humanitarian situation, no credible resumption of the negotiations would be possible. As we now meet, this tragic scenario is indeed emerging. Aleppo has become Syria's martyred city. If it is besieged enough, it could become the graveyard of the Vienna process, as there will be no lasting political solution or effective combating of terrorism, while Syrian civilians continue to be massacred.

As was stressed publicly by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Marc Ayrault, France cannot close its eyes to the tragedy taking place in Aleppo. We cannot allow the Aleppo siege to continue without responding. Therefore, France has three demands.

First of all, we formally call upon the allies of the regime, the members of the Security Council and the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) to assume their responsibilities so that the Syrian regime and its allies immediately stop their attacks on Aleppo. The lives of dozens of thousands of people and the future of a negotiated political solution, as well as the shared fundamental values of the Organization, are at stake.

Secondly, to relieve the suffering of the population, we call upon for the immediate establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire in Aleppo and Ghouta.

Thirdly, we call for an immediate lifting of all the sieges and for rapid, safe and unhindered access to all people in Syria, pursuant to the obligations under resolutions 2139 (2015), 2185 (2014), 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016). The Syrian authorities must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, and they must also abide by Security Council resolutions.

The ISSG mechanism; the Geneva task force; the efforts of Mr. De Mistura, which we support; and the appeals for bringing together the opposition will all achieve nothing because of the Aleppo siege. Let us be clear: there will be no possible cooperation with those who are responsible for this crime while it is being committed and they bear a heavy responsibilty in the face of history.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for his briefing.

At our most recent open debate (see S/PV.7740), my delegation spoke about working methods. We said that it was positive if Security Council members were to begin to express themselves in this open forum, rather than doing so only in closed consultations when the format of the meetings involved briefings followed by consultations. For that reason, we would like to make just a brief statement at this stage.

We are concerned about the lack of a solution to the grave humanitarian situation in Syria, which affects millions of people who are suffering from destruction, hunger and extreme violence. Cruel practices, which represent war crimes, such as the use of hunger as a war tactic, are taking place in Syria. This deplorable tactic is being used by parties to the conflict to inflict hunger on the millions of besieged people, including children.

The besieging of towns as a tactic of war continues to be one of the situations that should most urgently draw the attention of the Security Council, as it does not affect just the lives of people living under extreme conditions because of the lack of food, but also because it results in a lack of access to medicines and all the basic supplies necessary to meet their most basic needs.

Uruguay is concerned about the recent events that have taken place in the east of Aleppo city and the closing of the Castello road, which was the last

remaining access route to that area, the closing of which prevents the circulation of civilians, trade and humanitarian aid. Recently, Council members heard about improvements in the delivery of humanitarian aid in certain besieged cities, including some that had not received aid in years. However, at the same time, we learned with shock and horror the news of the bombings that occurred in those same cities immediately after the arrival of aid, as was the case in Daraya. The ongoing deliberate attacks perpetrated against hospitals where health-care personnel have been the victims is worrying; this situation calls for compliance with resolution 2286 (2016) adopted by the Council last May. Today, we have received information about new bombings in Aleppo that have caused civilian deaths as well as the destruction of hospitals, including a blood bank.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria can also be seen through the displacement of millions of people trying to escape the horror. The extreme seriousness of their situation is causing these people's extreme vulnerability, whether they be internally displaced by lack of access to a minimum standard of living or those who manage to flee the country only to become easy prey for organized crime.

The situation of children in Syria is extremely worrying. The effects of conflict on children is compromising the future of an entire generation. According to recent data from UNICEF, more than 8 out of 10 Syrian children — more than 8 million — have been affected by war and are in need of humanitarian assistance, including those within Syria and those who are refugees in neighbouring countries, namely, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.

In addition, one in three children in the country — approximately 3.7 million in total — has been born since the conflict began, with the result that they know only violence, fear and displacement. In this context of despair and chaos, Uruguay considers it necessary to redouble international efforts to prevent Syrian children from becoming a lost generation as a result, inter alia, of the lack of educational opportunities, child-soldier recruitment and forced marriages at an early age.

Accordingly, the recent and terrible case of beheading of a Palestinian boy by the Nour Al-Din Al-Zenki group is a barbaric and cowardly act. How far have we come? Is it no longer enough to recruit children? Do they also have to cut their heads off with knives? Uruguay rejects and expresses its strong condemnation of this savage act. We would add, further, that there is no God or religion that accepts an atrocity of this nature.

We support Mr. Stephen O'Brien's request for a weekly 48-hour truce in Aleppo.

Finally, Uruguay wishes to reiterate once again the importance of making greater progress towards a political solution that facilitates moving forward in the peace talks under way and which supports a process of transition. We are convinced that this is the only way to achieve lasting solutions to the current conflict, taking into account the provisions of resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016) of this Council.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): To say the least, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains of grave concern to us. The regime and its allies continue to pursue their own military objectives with complete and cynical disregard for the still-existing cessation of hostilities and their obligations under the May statement of the International Syria Support Group, to which no one seems to pay any attention any longer. Damascus has made no effort to save the political momentum but instead is keeping the Syrian people hostage to its plans to change the equation on the ground by military means.

We are alarmed by the dozens of deaths and hundreds of injured as a result of a systematic shelling by the pro-regime forces and its allies in both eastern and western Aleppo in the past weeks. As the head of delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Syria recently said, the situation in Aleppo is devastating, with the city being constantly bombed. We share concern that civilians on all sides are unable to find shelter, food and medical care. We call on all sides to the conflict to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

In a number of meetings we have raised the issue of the situation along the Castello road. Now the fears that we expressed have become a reality. Food supplies in eastern Aleppo are sufficient only until the end of July, and health care is not available. A humanitarian catastrophe is looming for some 300,000 people. Humanitarian access to eastern Aleppo city must be restored without any delay or preconditions.

Assessing the state of implementation of the July plan for cross-line deliveries, we stress again the importance of observing the principle of no conditions attached with

regard to the type of assistance to be provided. We are dismayed by the fact that in almost half of the locations the Syrian authorities have allowed lower numbers of beneficiaries to receive the humanitarian aid than the United Nations had projected. In this context, we join the United Nations and other colleagues in calling on all parties to the conflict to immediately provide unconditional, unimpeded and sustained access to the people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas across Syria, or at least to agree to the establishment of the weekly 48-hour humanitarian pause.

An improved humanitarian situation can only be achieved through the political resolution of the conflict. However, as we are less than a week away from the 1 August target date, we unfortunately do not see any positive changes that could lead to the resumption of the negotiation process. Without tangible progress on the political track, the best we and the Syrian people can hope for is reliance on irregular and interrupted deliveries of humanitarian aid by the United Nations and other actors, which is rather dismaying after all the efforts devoted to alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people.

We need to ask ourselves how many more briefings like today's we will have to hear before it is too late.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the five years since the beginning of the conflict in Syria and its consequences, caused in part by the involvement of outside parties, the country has suffered immeasurably and the international community has been unable to end the carnage, which cannot be achieved until reconciliation takes place. The parties are not interested in Syria itself, which has become fertile soil for terrorist groups and foreign terrorist fighters coming from various countries around the world, thereby making it fertile soil for chaos and sectarianism.

We have seen the Secretary-General's recent report on the humanitarian situation in Syria (S/2016/631). Despite the relative progress that has been achieved towards ensuring the access of humanitarian aid since the beginning of the work of the International Syria Support Group, so far we have only seen the military zones and targets increase and the number of external players involved, including those taking part in military activities, expand. Unfortunately, innocent victims are still dying in Syria. Furthermore, some people are using the unprecedented humanitarian crisis to achieve their own political goals.

For its part, Egypt has made efforts and concentrated on the process of ensuring humanitarian access, and we have achieved some progress in that regard.

We have sent a complete convoy to a number of towns, including Damascus, Dara', Qunaytirah and Suwayda', and we will persist in our efforts. We call upon the members of the Security Council and the international community to focus on providing whatever support it can to the Syrian people on the ground without politicizing or trading on the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Only a political solution will effectively put an end to the suffering of the Syrian people. We are all aware that the only formula for such a solution is the one agreed by the international community, as set out in various resolutions, including resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016) on the cessation of hostilities in Syria. In that regard, I recall that this solution represents our final opportunity to put an end to the Syrian conflict. In a constantly evolving international political situation, there is little time left, and what is possible today might turn into a missed opportunity tomorrow.

Allow me to reiterate that the current international consensus is based on a number of pillars. First, a cessation of hostilities in Syria is a prerequisite for establishing a complete ceasefire in the country. Secondly, a political transition must be attained through negotiations between the Syrian Government and the broadest possible spectrum of opposition groups, pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). Thirdly, we must work to improve the humanitarian situation and deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need of it in Syria, including in the besieged areas. Fourthly, we must combat the terrorism and extremism that run rampant in Syria. In the coming period, implementing those pillars will depend primarily on the international community's determination to put an end to the crisis and to comply with those agreements. It will also depend on the International Syrian Support Group's efforts to ensure that those measures are implemented.

In that context, I reiterate Egypt's support for the cooperation and coordination between the Russian Federation and the United States as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group. We welcome their tireless efforts at the political level and in terms of ensuring humanitarian access in Syria. I once again call on them to promptly agree on how to address the

situation on the ground, including by strengthening the implementation of the cessation of hostilities and preventing terrorist organizations and those groups affiliated with them from sabotaging it. Furthermore, they should push for the launch of direct negotiations between the Syrian parties as soon as possible, under the auspices of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

Despite the fact that the terrorist groups are clearly not parties to the ceasefire in Syria, we note that there has been an incomprehensible hesitation and politicization in dealing with those groups. That has led some armed groups to collaborate openly with terrorist organizations, particularly the Al-Nusra Front — the Syrian branch of Al-Qaida. We believe that such a brazen challenge to the international community can no longer be tolerated. In that connection, we call on the international community to set a timetable for including those groups on the list of terrorist organizations should they continue to cooperate with the Al-Nusra Front. Continuing to show complacency and turn a blind eye will only serve to encourage terrorism. Terrorist fighters who belong to so-called moderate groups have begun to emulate the beastly and sick acts perpetrated by Da'esh. They recently filmed the beheading of a child and posted the footage on social media.

In closing, allow me to call on and plead with all domestic, regional and international parties in Syria, on behalf of the Egyptian and Arab peoples, to have mercy and spare the Syrian people from the consequences of their score-settling and narrow political interests, and to be willing to compromise, if only partly, on those interests in order to show mercy and compassion to the innocent mothers and children of Syria who have committed no political sins.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I thank Stephen O'Brien for his briefing. As Stephen O'Brien has described, the humanitarian situation in Syria is devastating. The numbers verge on incomprehensible, although we know that for Syrians, their ordeal is all too real. And as Mr. O'Brien has confirmed, despite the improvements that had been made in recent months in respect of access, the overall humanitarian situation is worse. This humanitarian catastrophe is not just a product of indifference by the parties and their backers to the suffering of the Syrian people; in many cases, it is deliberate, and humanitarian access is manipulated for military advantage. Hospitals are routinely targeted. The fight against terrorism is used to justify indiscriminate attacks on civilians and any group that opposes the regime.

It is completely unacceptable that siege and starvation continue to be employed as methods of warfare. The recent closure of Castello road is particularly concerning, putting up to 300,000 more civilians in eastern Aleppo at risk of starvation. In this regard, we fully endorse Stephen O'Brien's call for a 48-hour humanitarian pause in and around Aleppo. It is also unacceptable that civilian neighbourhoods are being shelled and medical facilities bombed. In many cases, it appears they are deliberately targeted, in blatant violation of international law and resolution 2286 (2016). As we have heard, five medical clinics were hit in Aleppo province on 24 July alone. The growing humanitarian situation on the Jordan-Syria border is also of great concern. Over 100,000 people are now in need of ongoing assistance. It is a bleak picture, bleaker still because every bomb and blockade takes us farther away from the political solution to this brutal conflict.

There has been progress. We acknowledge Syria's positive response to the United Nations June and July plans. We welcome the efforts of the United States and Russia, as humanitarian co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group, to get aid to the people who need it. We acknowledge the extensive effort that Russia has been making on the ground to facilitate access and to ensure that agreements made by the Syrian regime are kept. While the level of approvals in July represents a slight improvement, it still provides for assistance to less than 50 per cent of Syrians in need, and that is if all the aid gets through, which it regularly does not.

Too often, we see the Syrian Government using administrative obstacles to block humanitarian access. We agree with the Secretary-General that humanitarian access must not be a one-off or occasional event. It cannot be limited to particular segments of the population or to specific kinds of aid. It is not a favour or a bargaining chip for negotiations — it is an obligation under international law. There are 5.47 million people living in besieged, hard-to-reach and priority cross-line locations. Providing intermittent, symbolic access to a few of these areas each month is not enough. We call on the Syrian Government to fully implement the July plan based on the needs assessment conducted by the United Nations. The continued removal of certain items, including medical supplies, is unacceptable. What possible justification can there be for removing

paediatric kits and diarrhoeal disease sets from convoys?

We also call on all parties to the conflict to take all feasible measures to protect civilians, as required under international humanitarian law and reaffirmed in various Council resolutions including resolution 2258 (2015) in order to safeguard the lives of all civilians living in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria. We all need to pressure the parties and their backers to prioritize ending the suffering of the Syrian people over their own narrow aims. This means getting the cessation of hostilities back on track, ending the brutal and cynical attacks on civilians and hospitals, and getting humanitarian assistance to the millions who need it. Tangible improvements on the ground are a humanitarian imperative. They can also help create the space and momentum needed for a successful resumption of intra-Syrian talks and progress towards the sustainable political resolution to this conflict that the Syrian people so desperately need.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am largely in agreement with the statements of the Ambassadors of Egypt and New Zealand.

I thank Mr. O'Brien. After listening to his briefing on behalf of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, we note once again that the hell that is the war in Syria has no limits. The glimmer of hope we saw late last year is on the brink of being extinguished. There is a pressing need to restore a cessation of hostilities throughout the country. We thank the United States and the Russian Federation for their efforts to revitalize resolution 2268 (2016). We trust that they will bear fruit in the coming days and that this meeting will have a positive effect on the tragedy befalling the Syrian people.

Only five months ago, we were taking the first steps to isolate the terrorist groups in Syria and thereby normalize the lives of its civilians. Humanitarian access was improving. Up to 1 million people have received assistance in 2016. Nevertheless, today we are witnessing an escalation in fighting that could jeopardize all the gains we have achieved. Often, attacks are carried out without the slightest regard for the basic tenets of international humanitarian law.

It is unconscionable that there have been 40 attacks on hospitals and clinics in Syria so far this year, according to the World Health Organization. The latest was on the Omar bin Abdulaziz hospital in Aleppo. No less tragic is the fact that the Syrian regime is removing medical supplies from the convoys, despite pressure from the international community and the Russian Federation. I cannot say it often enough — this is unacceptable.

We continue to receive reports of barrel-bomb attacks in urban zones. As the Deputy Ambassador of Uruguay so aptly said, the abduction and subsequent decapitation of a child in Aleppo, as captured in a video that was circulated on social media last week, is absolutely inhuman. The child was only 11 years old, and the most savage brutality imaginable ended his life.

Finally, I want to mention a worker from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — a Palestinian by the name of Yaser Mahmoud Shuaeeb — who lost his life on 17 July, also in Aleppo, as he was driving a humanitarian convoy. I reiterate the pressing need for a cessation of hostilities. Meanwhile, we urge all parties to the conflict to respect international law, which mandates the protection of civilians. Specifically, we wish to highlight two essential actions that must be implemented immediately.

First, we call for humanitarian pauses in the fighting, with a view to facilitating humanitarian access, including food distribution, and simultaneously allowing for the most urgent medical evacuations. With regard to Aleppo, I welcome Stephen O'Brien's proposal to establish weekly 48-hour pauses in the fighting. I also fully align myself with the three proposals made by the French Ambassador. Secondly, we call for a clarification of the state of the access route to east Aleppo, the so-called Ca. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/631), the lives of between 200,000 and 300,000 people depend on that route, which has been unusable since 17 July.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The multi-year conflict eroding Syria today, due to terrorists fuelled with weapons from the outside, violations and flows of internally displaced persons and refugees, has seen a deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Syria. At the same time, following the establishment of the ceasefire regime, we have seen some progress. Humanitarian access has increased significantly and difficulties are being discussed in the special format of the International Syria Support Group.

The Government of Damascus is doing a great deal to ensure that, in such a difficult context of internal armed conflict, its citizens can enjoy a normal life. As a result of the unrelenting work of Russian specialists based in Hmeimim, the number of residential areas participating in the ceasefire is now 209. More than 60 armed opposition movements have stated their intention to implement the ceasefire regime. There are ongoing talks with armed militias about extending the ceasefire to the governorates of Daraa, As-Suwayda and Homs. Russia is providing humanitarian assistance to Syrians through both the State and civil society. In this regard, we stress the need to establish a sound process for the return of internally displaced persons to reconciled regions and to rebuild public infrastructure there.

The priority format for humanitarian operations remains by land, with the direct agreement of the Syrian Government. As a last resort, airdrops could be used. Air delivery has become a lifesaver for hundreds of thousands in Deir ez-Zor, besieged by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. Humanitarian supplies are dropped with the active participation of Russian forces. This has been effective for the provision of assistance to those in Al-Hasakah, and we can therefore only welcome the opening of the air bridge in Qamishli. However, let us not forget that the situation arises from the fact that Turkey has been blocking the crossing point from Nusaybin for several months now. We hope that Ankara will make the right decision to alleviate the suffering of Syrian civilians.

We call on the United States, the United Kingdom and other allies of Turkey and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to provide Turkey with the necessary assistance. I recall that when we discussed the opening of the crossing point to Damascus, our Western partners imposed preconditions or linkages almost every day. We stress that it is unacceptable for fighters to use civilians as human shields. It is well known that opponents of the Syrian Government often use this tactic, trapping people in blocked-off residential areas.

We do not question the need for humanitarian assistance, including in besieged areas. However, we believe that the Government of Syria's military operations to block and destroy terrorists aim to reinstate law and order. In a number of cases, as a result of such actions, fighters terrorizing locals have signalled their readiness to lay down arms.

We are deeply worried about information that, as a consequence of strikes led by the United States coalition in the area of Manbij, in the north of the country, dozens of people, including women and children, have been killed and injured in camps. We are struck by the fact that not a single word has been said about this incident in the statements made by the representatives of the United Kingdom, France and other participants in the coalition. We hope that this incident will be discussed in detail by the representative of the United States, who will take the floor after us. We do not need promises of investigations. We have been waiting five years for an investigation into civilian bombing victims in Libya, but we still have not heard a word about that either. I am therefore sure that United States military knows how the situation stands now.

The news of the atrocious attack on a Palestinian boy, beheaded by bandits from the Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki, was heart-wrenching. Some have supported this armed group and its cronies in Syria, calling them moderate opposition members, including them in the ceasefire regime, and by any and all means protecting the group from due payback. It is high time for the Security Council to add to the list of terrorists wreaking havoc in Syria.

As a result of the intensified actions carried out over the ceasefire period by Jabhat Al-Nusra and its allies, the situation in Aleppo remains urgent. Terrorists use the ceasefire regime to receive reinforcement from abroad, resupply and mobilize fresh forces, including through the recruitment of minors. As in other besieged areas, the fighters entrenched there are regularly provided with military assistance. The Castello Road is no exception; we have information to the effect that this route is actively being used not for the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians, but to provide terrorists with weapons and armaments, as well as for the passage of jihad-mobiles with suicide bombers. We also know that those in eastern areas of Aleppo can easily move by day to the western part of the city, where the situation is significantly better. Of course, however the situation might be in Aleppo, there is a need to prevent a humanitarian disaster there.

Just a few words on Darayya: fighters holed up there are carrying out broad artillery strikes, making the provision of humanitarian assistance impossible. At the same time, the supplies that do get there are flowing into the markets of eastern Ghouta. These types of commercial arrangements have characterized

extremist-controlled areas. Our delegation has always spoken about the futile effect of unilateral sanctions against Damascus. Such measures should be lifted, as they cause suffering to people.

First and foremost, there is a need to lift the ban on the provision of medications and fuel. The intermittent pitting of Security Council members one against the other on the humanitarian dossier, the imposition of new ultimatums on the Government of Syria and calling upon Russia to bring pressure to bear on the Government is counterproductive. We believe instead that people should go to Damascus, establish working contacts and actually do something useful. It is clear that foreign sponsors are not upholding their obligations with respect to working with the opposition. They have primary responsibility for a lack of humanitarian access in terrorist-held areas, first and foremost Fo'ah and Kefraya, where the food situation is extremely difficult. Incessant shelling by jihadists there is killing peaceful resident.

Fighters continue with artillery strikes, and the people suffer. We call upon United Nations staff to carefully discharge their mandate, uphold the sovereignty of Syria, not deviate from the principles of neutrality and impartiality, and work to provide help for all those in need, not just those who are in territories controlled by the opposition. We really cannot shake the impression that the spotlight is being intentionally focused on the provision of humanitarian assistance to those areas where the Government of Syria is carrying out counter-terrorism operations. In certain areas controlled by the Government, where people are just as much in need, humanitarian convoys do not seem to be any special hurry. These double standards must be done away with; all need help without exception and without any artificial linkages with those areas in Syria approved by Damascus.

Tasks have to be realistic and cooperation close with the Syrian Government. There is a need to heed the Government's view, including in the design of supply routes. The justified view of Damascus in ensuring security for humanitarian staff is often not taken into account. This was recently demonstrated by the incident in which a driver from the Syrian Red Crescent sustained injuries in a hastily equipped humanitarian convoy sent by night.

Just a few words on politics: let us stop the foot-dragging and resume United Nations-led Syrian talks. Russia is sparing no effort to bring the sides to a peaceful settlement on the basis of international law. An integral element of this strategy is cooperation with the United States, as co-Chair of the International Syria Support Group, as well as with other partners in this very special format. We hope that all partners will seek to shore up rather than erode achievements.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his briefing and for his special attention to the 250,000 to 275,000 Syrians trapped in eastern Aleppo.

Let us put eastern Aleppo in some context. For years, the Council has called on the Al-Assad regime to end the brutal sieges that have inflicted suffering on hundreds of thousands of Syrians, who have been deprived of the food and medicine needed to survive. The community of Darayya, outside Damascus, besieged by the regime, received no United Nations aid for more than three years. Communities in eastern Ghouta received no United Nations deliveries for more than two years. After long and painful negotiations, negotiations that should never have been necessary in the first place, the United Nations and its partners barely managed to reach Syria's 18 besieged areas this year. Often the United Nations was able to send only a single convoy, and more often than not the Al-Assad regime removed supplies from those convoys before they could reach civilians.

It was actually hard to imagine how Syria's humanitarian situation could get worse, and yet Al-Assad's military advances around Aleppo, undertaken with Russia's support, now threaten to bring the suffering of the Syrian people to a new low. We have spoken repeatedly and in great detail over the past six months about the horrific starvation of Syrians in the besieged areas of Madaya and Darayya. Eastern Aleppo, by comparison, has up to seven times as many people as those trapped in Madaya and up to 75 times as many as in Darayya. Eastern Aleppo is quickly falling victim to the Al-Assad regime's typical pattern of starve-and-surrender tactics. Over the past month the Al-Assad regime flagrantly violated the cessation of hostilities by attacking Aleppo. The regime and its supporters have cut off Castello Road, the only remaining supply route for the more than 250,000 Syrians living in the eastern part of the city, severing their access to food, fuel, medicine, clean water and other essential supplies.

Brave and courageous humanitarian workers such as those Mr. O'Brien described continue to try to deliver medical supplies and aid on smaller roads at great, great risk, but alternative options for delivering humanitarian aid are diminishing rapidly. Airstrikes by the Al-Assad regime and by Russia are making the use of those other roads totally precarious. Russia, as a co-sponsor of the cessation of hostilities, must halt these attacks and persuade the regime to do the same, and they must ensure the reopening of the Castello Road. Russia, the Al-Assad regime and other groups fighting around Aleppo should heed the call of the United Nations for a weekly, 48-hour pause to allow for the delivery of essential supplies.

Look at what people are going through: a doctor, Samer Attar, who recently returned to the United States from volunteering in Aleppo, described the scene in clinics after attacks by the Al-Assad regime: "Patient after patient, non-stop, was wheeled into the small emergency room. I saw mutilated limbs, dismembered bodies, dead children, screaming patients. People literally bleed to death in front of you and there is nothing you can do about it". Imagine being a doctor in that circumstance.

Aleppo's residents are not even safe when they get to a hospital. According to the United Nations, the Omar bin Abdul Aziz hospital in eastern Aleppo has been hit three times since June. Airstrikes reportedly struck yet another hospital in the Jebel Saman district of eastern Aleppo on 19 July, killing at least six civilians and injuring 17, and, as we have heard just in the last 48 hours, we have seen reports that the regime has bombed four more hospitals, including one that cared for children.

Feras Badawi, a journalist in eastern Aleppo, told Human Rights Watch, "We have not seen vegetables in weeks, and airstrikes are not giving us a break". Ibrahim Al-Leith, a volunteer first responder with Syria Civil Defence, described the long lines forming at shops, because "we are really expecting a famine in a few days".

In another deeply alarming development, a video circulated last week that showed rebel fighters beheading a young boy in Aleppo. The brutal killing of this boy, reported to be 12-year-old Abdullah Issa, is appalling. The United States condemns in the strongest terms this unconscionable act as well as the unlawful targeting of children and the use of child soldiers by all parties to this conflict. We note that the opposition has condemned this crime and promised to bring those responsible for his death to justice in a transparent manner, something that we have never heard the Al-Assad regime do when faced with similar allegations of atrocities. Instead, despite countless videos, reams and reams of elaborate photographic evidence and hundreds of thousands of eyewitness reports gathered by credible independent actors, we get from the Syrian regime time and again only blithe, uncurious but always dogmatic denials — a cold, cruel indifference to the fate of the Syrian people.

I would also note that the Russian Federation has never once acknowledged even the possible involvement of the Russian Air Force in the horrific strikes that have resulted in significant civilian casualties, nor has Russia acknowledged the huge number of Russian strikes against opposition groups that signed up for the cessation of hostilities — the very groups, in fact, mentioned by the representative of the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation is in an extremely weak position to point fingers at the United States in the Council. We look forward to Russia opening just a single investigation into strikes that have killed civilians.

The situation in Syria's other besieged areas remains dire. Even excluding Aleppo, 196,500 more Syrians are living in besieged areas than were in January. These Syrians depend on sporadic aid deliveries, which are all too often disrupted by the regime's bureaucratic pretexts or by fighting on the ground. In no single month this year has the United Nations been allowed to reach even half of Syrians living in besieged areas. United Nations Special Adviser Jan Egeland recently warned that Madaya was on the brink of starvation. And the regime continues to dispute the numbers in the United Nations beneficiary list — a cynical attempt to further reduce how much aid gets delivered, in the rare instances that aid gets delivered all. The United Nations should be determining what is needed, how much and where — and not the regime, which has long practiced collective punishment and indiscriminately branded civilians as terrorists.

The regime's actions also continue to take a severe toll on the health sector. This month alone, forces loyal to Al-Assad twice removed medical supplies from convoys bound for the besieged community of Al-Waer in Homs. What exactly did the regime take? It took midwifery kits to help deliver healthy babies and treatments for diarrhoea. It is obscene.

In May, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2286 (2016), which calls for the protection of medical personnel and facilities. Yet hospitals, clinics and medical personnel are still being struck regularly by the regime and Russian forces. In recent days, it was reported that air strikes conducted by the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant may have caused a large number of civilian casualties in Manbij. The United States will carefully and thoroughly review any and all credible information that we can gather about the incident, including information from organizations within Syria that document harm to civilians. We are also now trying to investigate those events. This is a process that is complicated by the extremely limited access of Syrian civil society groups and others to areas controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. We are determined to do whatever we can to understand what took place.

The United States goes to great lengths to reduce the risk of non-combatant casualties, and complies with the law of armed conflict in its operations. It will continue to do so. If we determine that civilians were harmed in Manbij by our strikes, we will acknowledge it and look at what steps can be taken, consistent with the policies that President Obama announced in his executive order of 1 July on pre- and post-strike measures to address civilian casualties in United States operations. This is an extremely important issue.

In conclusion, last week, Secretary Kerry travelled to Moscow in an attempt to address the two main forces undermining the cessation of hostilities — first and foremost, the rampant violations by the Al-Assad regime, including the targeting of both civilians and groups that are supposed to be protected, as well as offensives led by the Al-Qaida affiliate in Syria, the Al-Nusra Front, which increasingly poses a threat to our interests. In Moscow, the United States and Russia agreed on a series of concrete steps that, if fully implemented, could restore the cessation of hostilities and create space for Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura's efforts to launch a genuine political transition process. Our technical experts have been working on the details for implementing such steps. Ultimate success is of course far from assured, but we know that we have a responsibility to try and exhaust all diplomatic options.

Moving forward requires a period of reduced violence. If Aleppo remains under siege, it is hard to see how that is going to work. As we speak, Aleppo's residents are struggling to find food and medicine for their families. Maher Abu al-Walid, a 25-year-old resident, said in an interview, "We are not starving yet, but we are all panicking now". He has to support his wife and 7-month-year-old daughter, Sham, as food supplies are running low and prices are increasing. Imagine for just one moment what it must feel like to realize that, within in a few days, every shelf at your local market will be bare and that you may have no place to go and no way to afford the food that your 7-month-old infant desperately needs. All of us here must do our utmost to ensure that Maher's fear does not become a reality — a reality that far too many in Syria are already enduring.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary O'Brien for his briefing.

Conflict has recently intensified in parts of Syria, resulting in civilian casualties, the destruction of medical and relief facilities and the obstruction of United Nations humanitarian relief operations. At the same time, we have also taken note of the fact that humanitarian assistance in Syria over the first six months of this year has yielded some results.

China is very sympathetic to the suffering that the Syrian people have endured over the past five years. We urge the Syrian parties concerned to effectively implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, comprehensively open up humanitarian access, cease hostilities as soon as possible and create the conditions necessary to enable the United Nations to continue to carry out its humanitarian relief programmes. The international community should lend a helping hand and provide assistance to Syria and the neighbouring countries that are taking in refugees, so as to help alleviate the suffering of civilians in besieged and hard-to-reach areas and refugees located outside Syria.

A political solution is the only way out with regard to the situation in Syria. It is also the fundamental way out for a solution to the relevant Syrian issues, including the Syrian humanitarian issue. The international community should be firm and unwavering in undertaking a political solution to the Syrian issue, continue to allow the Syrian people determine the future and fate of Syria, continue to have the United Nations play its primary role in pursuing its good offices, firmly support Special Envoy de Mistura's work, and launch the next round of Geneva talks as soon as possible. All Syrian parties should follow the principle of resolving easier issues first and difficult ones later, take a step-by-step approach, meet each

other half-way, build mutual confidence and gradually find a solution acceptable to all.

China has been actively supporting efforts to ease the Syrian humanitarian situation. Through multiple channels, China has provided numerous forms of humanitarian assistance, including food and supplies, to Syria and other countries in the region. China wishes to work with the international community and continue to contribute to easing the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing and commend him on his work at the helm of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We also commend his team.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela appreciates the progress made with regard to the humanitarian situation in Syria during the first half of this year, which was acknowledged by the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2016/631). Accordingly, so far this year, approximately 1 million people have received some form of help from humanitarian agencies. While the situation is not ideal, with constant clashes occurring in numerous parts of Syria, it is a fact that convoys carrying humanitarian aid have reached various areas of the country where their assistance is required — a fact that we see in a positive light.

In that regard, we welcome the recent delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Qalaat al-Madiq, which received 40 convoys of aid intended for 32,000 people. In general, we note that there has been real progress in the humanitarian area. However, it has been limited in scope by the delicate situation that the country is undergoing owing to the actions of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), the Al-Nusra Front and other armed non-State actors, which have increased activities in some areas of the country. The situation in Aleppo is particularly worrying since groups that some international actors call the "moderate opposition" are simultaneously fighting the Al-Nusra Front terrorists. This military collaboration affects the political settlement of the armed conflict. As has been reiterated in various resolutions, terrorist and associated groups are excluded from the negotiations and should be fought.

The cessation of hostilities has established areas of peace that have helped civilians attend to their urgent needs. That is why we must build on the ceasefire and advance the strengthening of local ceasefire agreements with a view to achieving a political agreement to put an end to the conflict. We should therefore like to take this opportunity to express our support for what by Mr. O'Brien proposal concerning weekly, 48-hour humanitarian pauses. That would help to alleviate the difficult conditions in which civilians find themselves. We recognize that in some cases the situations on the ground make it difficult for humanitarian agencies to carry out their work; it is therefore necessary to lift the sieges in all affected areas and comply with the provisions of resolution 2268 (2016). We condemn the practices that violate international humanitarian law.

We recognize the current cooperation between the Syrian authorities and the World Food Programme, an institution which has reached more than 4 million people and undertaken 70 airdrops for the inhabitants of Deir ez-Zor. Al-Raqqa is one of the areas where humanitarian needs have become more acute because of the control being exercised by ISIS, which is referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/631).

We also pay tribute to the humanitarian agencies deployed in the field. They are undertaking commendable work in adverse and highly risky conditions. We repeat that these agencies must not be military targets, much less actors in the armed conflict. Their only task is to provide assistance to those who need it most, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law. However, their work should be coordinated with the State concerned, in accordance with international law.

We reiterate our condemnation of ISIS for systematically denying access to humanitarian assistance to the civilian population, as well as for enforced disappearances, criminal actions against ethnic minorities, women and the recruitment of children in the areas it controls and the use of civilians as human shields, which we have been informed is taking place in Manbij. ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front and their associates have become the greatest threat to peace and stability in the region. Their influence must be fought with all the necessary means, in accordance with international law.

Similarly, we join others in rejecting today the recent beheading of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy. That happened in Aleppo and was executed by an armed group called the "moderate rebels", which enjoys international support. So far we have not heard any condemnation of that brutal murder by those who are

financing these groups. These terrorist practices are no different from those executed by the Al-Nusra Front and ISIS. Moreover, their actions are in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. They represent a war crime and those responsible must be brought to justice.

We take this opportunity to condemn the recruitment of minors. That practice undermines the provisions of the Council with regard to children in armed conflict.

Finally, we reiterate that overcoming the humanitarian crisis depends on putting an the end to the armed conflict. That is why we reaffirm our support for the efforts of the Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura to establish peace and to find a political and peaceful solution to the Syrian armed conflict. However tragic the situation may be on the ground, it must not be an obstacle to bringing the parties to the conflict to the table. We therefore call on the parties and those with influence on them to resume the political negotiations as soon as possible. Like all members of the Security Council have said, the situation requires a political solution and we must endeavour to make that a reality. The prolongation of the conflict will mean only more suffering and destruction for the Syrian people.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to commend Mr.Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for the clarity of his briefing. I would also like to commend the high quality of the twenty-ninth report (S/2016/631) presented to the Council, pursuant to resolution 2168 (2013), 2171 (2014) and 2258 (2258). Today, it is quite clear that the cessation of hostilities, which is crucial for humanitarian assistance and a sine qua non for the peace process, is seriously compromised. That is demonstrated by clashes between the Syrian army and opposition armed groups in various areas, including Damascus, Rif Dimashq and eastern Ghouta, which have resulted in numerous victims and injured.

Like previous speakers, I would like to convey my deep concern given the escalation of military actions taken by the Government forces in Aleppo, which have resulted in many victims, including many civilians, in particular children.

Along the same lines, the Senegalese delegation condemns the attacks by armed groups against the part of the city that is under the Government's control, which have led to many civilian casualties. That is why we recall the obligation that falls on warring sides under international humanitarian law and human rights law, as the increasing bombings threaten those on the ground — between 200,000 and 300,000 people in Aleppo — as a result of the blocked Castillo road, the only route to access the eastern part of the city. We also call on the Syrian authorities, with the help of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), in particular the co-chairs — the Russian Federation and the United States of America — to work to ensure that the Syrian populations can be assisted by responding to the request of humanitarian players to implement the weekly cease-fire. It is worth noting that in addition to more than hundreds of dead, many wounded, this violence has resulted in the displacement of tens of thousand people, in particular in Idlib, where according to figures 45,000 fled air strikes.

Children continue to bear the brunt of the war. In addition to issues of civil status, family displacements and early marriage, the phenomenon of child soldiers remains of utmost concern. My delegation would like to know the fate of 150 children who were kidnapped from the Thib Antar school to serve as child soldiers, when they should have been taking exams.

With regard to humanitarian assistance, my delegation welcomes the ongoing efforts of stakeholders, in particular those of the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, to alleviate the suffering of the millions of Syrians affected by war. However, let us not lose sight of the fact that the goal of providing 1,500,000 people with assistance, which was established by the United Nations, has not been achieved owing to violence and administrative delays. We would therefore call upon the Government to work to ensure that the goal of 1.2 million people be reached in July.

There is a particular need for further authorizations for United Nations staff. While such authorizations have allowed for progress in the provision of aid to besieged and hard-to-reach areas, the number of people living in such areas has increased by approximately 900,000 — from 4.6 million to 5.45 million — mainly due to the violence.

The ongoing destruction of public infrastructure, such as markets, schools and hospitals, particularly in the Aleppo and Idlib governorates, continues to be of concern for us. In addition, erratic access to basic

social services, such as electricity in cities, is affecting some 2 million people. In that context, UNICEF's commendable efforts to provide more than 3 million litres of water to 2 million people should be welcomed.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is experiencing difficulty in deploying at some of the camps in Yalda, from which the camp at Yarmuk is provisioned for the purpose of serving Palestinian refugees. That is due to clashes between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front, which is a real source of concern for us. We welcome the efforts of the World Health Organization and UNICEF thanks to which 772,000 children have been vaccinated, which represents 53.6 per cent coverage. We would like to take this opportunity to ask about those children who have not been reached due to violence in the localities of Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa.

The Senegalese delegation welcomes the excellent cooperation that United Nations bodies continues to enjoy with the Turkish and Jordanian Governments. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to pay due tribute to the members of the medical and humanitarian staff, who continue — sometimes at the risk of their lives — to help the Syrian people in their quest for peace and dignity.

Finally, my delegation would like to reiterate its belief, which is shared by everyone here, that only a political solution, which is being discussed in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations, can help end the Syrian humanitarian catastrophe. We therefore call upon stakeholders and the countries of the region, as well as the International Syria Support Group, particularly its Chairs, to push for peace in the region.

After six public debates on the humanitarian situation in Syria and one public debate on the political situation, the Security Council should scale up its effort to help reach a political solution, pursuant to the obligation we imposed on ourselves in resolution 2254 (2015) with the 1 August deadline for starting the transition process. Terrorist organizations are taking full advantage of the situation in Syria, with the growing risk of our seeing them take hold of materials out of which they are going to make weapons of mass destruction. The terrorist contagion is spreading, which means that the Security Council has to do everything it can to stop it.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for his briefing on the disturbing humanitarian situation in Syria.

Most regrettably, the conflict in Syria continues while the parties completely disregard their obligations under international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. This is an irrational war that is disproportionately affecting the civilian population.

After a short respite, with the partial cessation of hostilities and improvements in humanitarian access, we are now witnessing the escalation of violence in and around the city of Aleppo, with hundreds of thousands trapped by the fighting and unable to access basic assistance. As the Security Council tries to exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities and a return to negotiations, the parties on the ground continue to strive for military gains. The closure of the last remaining access route in and out of eastern Aleppo, cutting off all civilians from humanitarian assistance, is just the latest demonstration of the total disregard there is for the Council's resolutions and international humanitarian law.

Although we fully support humanitarian agencies in their efforts to address critical life-saving assistance, such as food, medical supplies and fuel, and its supply to all besieged and hard-to-reach areas, the recent escalation in fighting between Government forces and non-State armed groups should lead us to focus on where these non-State armed groups are acquiring weapons and resources. One issue that is barely mentioned in our discussions is the fact that regional and international stakeholders are not being held responsible for providing the means that allow this bloody war to continue. Paradoxically, humanitarian assistance is blocked or is made hard to reach for those in need, while the means to make war continue reaching the parties to the conflict.

In conclusion, we urge the parties to return to negotiations so that a political solution to this bloody war may be found and so that humanitarian agencies may have unconditional, safe and unhindered access to all those in need. We condemn the air strikes and bombings in eastern and western Aleppo in the recent weeks that have resulted in numerous deaths and injuries, among which there were many children, as well as the destruction of hospitals and other vital civilian infrastructure. While we support the establishment of

a humanitarian truce, as requested by the Secretary-General, to allow humanitarian agencies access to those in desperate need of food and water, among other basic necessities, we emphasize that the proliferation of terrorist groups and other non-State armed groups poses a dangerous threat, not only for Syria but for the entire region. The Security Council and the International Syria Support Group must step up concerted efforts to cut off the flow of arms into Syria and jointly combat the growing threat of radicalism and terrorists.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I thank Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for his briefing, which brought into the Security Council the gruesome reality of the besieged areas in Syria and the horrendous suffering of the people there. That has prompted my delegation, and me, to ask to take the floor in response.

Earlier this month we waited in anticipation as access was granted by the Syrian authorities to the United Nations to bring its humanitarian programme to the 34 out of 35 besieged and hard-to-reach areas, either partially or in full. We had high hope that it was a positive development building on the breakthrough following the 1 June deadline by the International Syria Support Group, and that it would lead to more sustained access to all besieged and hard-to-reach areas. The promising outlook we had at the beginning of the month quickly diminished, however, with the disturbing news that about 300,000 people in eastern Aleppo had been cut off from humanitarian assistance, thereby triggering death and a constant struggle against starvation.

The closure of the Castello road more than a week ago effectively blocked civilian and humanitarian movement, and it is deeply worrying that trapped civilians are being subject to heavy shelling, as violence in Aleppo escalated. Much to our horror, civilian casualties and fatalities are increasing, and hospitals and other medical facilities continue to be targeted and destroyed. Indiscriminate attacks and air strikes in Aleppo resulted, inter alia, in the death of almost 100 civilians in bombings last Tuesday. We welcome a commitment to investigating that unfortunate incident.

While we know the importance of the fight against terrorist groups in Syria, such attacks must not be at the expense of civilians. A humanitarian pause at this critical juncture should be given serious consideration. The revolting beheading of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy in Aleppo last week, allegedly perpetrated by a member of the moderate opposition, highlights the plight of children in Aleppo. In addition to more than 200,000 children killed in Menbij last week, the United Nations Children's Fund has reported that a further 235,000 are trapped in the area. Priority must be given to allowing civilians, especially children, to flee to safety from their homes. The unspeakable crimes committed against them must end.

The Council only recently welcomed the Iraqi Government's approach, which consisted of applying a pause in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Fallujah to facilitate the safe passage of civilians, protected from mortars and missiles. The same standard must be applied to Aleppo. We must hasten the political process, abandon these sieges and end this carnage. Delays would only cause more deaths and bring the dehumanizing level of suffering to a new low.

The President: I will now deliver my own statement in my national capacity.

I thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his detailed briefing. Japan expresses strong concern about the increasingly desperate situation in Syria. It is intolerable that eastern Aleppo, Menbij and some other places appear to be on their way to being added to the list of besieged locations. We are disappointed that July's humanitarian access plan has been poorly implemented thus far. We commend the enormous efforts made by the United Nations, such humanitarian bodies as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, and the co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group to secure access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

Meanwhile, it is obvious that increased airstrikes and fighting on the ground block and delay sustained humanitarian access. Mr. O'Brien reminded us of the importance of implementing our own resolutions, especially resolution 2286 (2016), which addresses the protection of civilians, medical personnel and facilities. This resolution does not focus on any specific conflict area, but Syria is a place where such protection is definitely necessary. In that regard, ongoing efforts by the United States and Russia to extend the cessation of hostilities to hotspots like eastern Aleppo are critically important.

Even a temporary ceasefire can allow the United Nations and humanitarian bodies to reach those Syrians who are desperately awaiting interagency convoys. Japan fully supports Mr. O'Brien's proposal to hold

weekly, 48-hour cessations of hostilities to secure United Nations inter-agency humanitarian access. I wish to conclude by stating that Japan, along with other Council members and the International Syria Support Group, will continue to support and work towards a lasting political settlement.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have just two or three brief comments to make.

First, with regard to my American colleague's response to the question of the bombing in northern Syria, which, according to press reports, has killed many civilians, I will not conceal my surprise at her remark that the investigations would be conducted based on information from civil society groups. So there are no American drones, no American special forces in Syria, no coalition special forces, no United States satellites with intelligence capacity, no video recordings, which are made by all modern-day bombers when they make a hit. I would not like to believe that the United States-led alliance is in such a woeful military state. This reference to civil society makes me think that we are never really going to know the truth; it will all be swept under the carpet.

With regard to Ms. Power's assertion that Russia has never acknowledged or investigated, allow me to recall that whenever an insinuation arises here, she immediately starts talking very loudly about this in the Security Council without even waiting for corroboration. In fact, investigations took place immediately, and the very same day or the next day, at our briefings with the Ministry of Defence, we demonstrated the unjustified nature of the insinuations made in the course of the propaganda war surrounding Syria. I truly hope that the United States-led coalition will act with similar openness.

Lastly, I would like to make a general comment. I am not sure whether it is a coincidence or perhaps intentional that we are increasingly digressing into the concrete details in the Security Council. There are two groups that discuss such matters: the humanitarian group and the group for the ceasefire. In Geneva they discuss details, but the Security Council is, after all, a political body. But we are digressing into discussions concerning Aleppo, the Castillo road and many other situations. We can discuss that, of course, but what I am saying is, let us not lose sight of the bigger picture — the root causes of the tragedy and dynamics in Syria.

It all began with an effort to topple a legitimate Government and promote regime change. At that time, the idea of using terrorists for that purpose did not seem so bad. Finally, it was understood that terrorists could take power in Syria, as was the case in Iraq, and then another huge error was made, namely, the preparation of the so-called moderate opposition, which was supposed to fight not with the Government but with terrorists. Those groups were immediately routed and went over to the side of the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorists, taking with them the weapons that had been given to them by the Western sponsors of these reckless programmes.

Therefore, had the Syrian border been closed to military convoys — as we have said on many occasions — and and had the Castillo road been open only to humanitarian convoys, we would not be faced with situation prevailing in Aleppo today. If the United States had made good on its promises, which it has been making for at least half a year, to separate the Al-Nusra Front from the so-called moderate opposition, then we would not have the situation that is prevailing in eastern Aleppo and some other areas of Syria.

With all my criticism of the United States, which I have been unable to avoid, I want to confirm that we continue to work with the United States as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group. It is very tense, difficult work, and I hope we can soon build the international community's capacity to combat the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist organizations so as to radically improve the humanitarian situation in Syria in combination with political talks whose speedy resumption we are pressing for.

The President: The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I would like to say a couple of words in response.

First of all, I think that it would be very useful if the Russian Federation could circulate the results of its investigation to the Council. Personally, having been very concerned about Russian strikes — particularly on hospitals in Aleppo and other areas that the Syrian

regime has decided to pursue during the cessation of hostilities — we would welcome those investigations but would also be curious about whether Russia, in those investigations, has ever acknowledged harming civilians in its strikes in the Syrian theatre. It would be very useful to have that information shared with us.

The second point is, I think, more fundamental, as one of the things that has created such division over the Syria conflict. Fundamentally, if the like and the unlike are lumped together, if the parties to the cessation of hostilities are lumped together with those who have rejected the cessation of hostilities, if civilians are lumped together with the Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State in the Iraq and the Sham, and if those who have been lumped together are targeted along with terrorist groups, not only will innocents just minding their own business who do not deserve to be targeted be killed — something that has happened in spades and that the Syrian regime has done from the beginning of the conflict — but the seeds for more conflict will be sown, more terrorists will be created and a conflict that has gone on and caused too much heartbreak already will be prolonged. Therefore, from a peace and security standpoint, a core reason to distinguish between parties to the cessation of hostilities and terrorist groups, between terrorist fighters and civilians who find themselves stuck in their vicinity is to save innocent lives and to promote peace and security.

Thirdly, as I said in my earlier remarks, we are deeply invested in the United States-Russian effort to bring peace to Syria. I think it is fair to say that in the early days of that effort we saw a material return and significant benefit for some people in Syria. We saw more access to besieged areas than we had ever seen before. Every one of the besieged areas, as I also noted my remarks, has now been reached, albeit some places with only one convoy. We saw a reduction in violence, which was a huge relief to people in those parts of Syria who got to experience that reduction in horrific violence.

But let us be real: the description at the outset of the Russian Ambassador's remarks was not a description of Syria. It might be a description of some kind of Potemkin village in Syria, but Aleppo is burning. Aleppo is being besieged. The single lifeline to the city, and to nearly 300,000 people, has been cut off by this regime, backed by that regime. We are deeply invested in trying to make this work, but we have got to see the siege of Aleppo end and access restored — or all of our good intentions are going to be for naught and this conflict is going to continue, along with the terrorist threat and the refugee flow that emanate from it, with all that has meant for the neighbouring countries and for Europe, and all that it will mean for the global order.

Let us start with Aleppo. Let us get Aleppo right. Let us save people. And let us continue to invest — again, in the kind of cooperation that is needed to bring this conflict to an end. Part of that cooperation means distinguishing between terrorist actors and those who would deliberately target civilians — as the regime does — and those who do not.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I do not agree with a number of the observations made by Ms. Power, but I would simply like to note that she rightly pointed out that it is important to distinguish between the moderate opposition and Jabhat Al-Nusra, which is exactly what we are saying. As for the rest, I am not going to engage in dispute, as I would like to end on a positive note and I want to hear from our colleague the Rermanent Representative of Syria.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. I would also like to thank you because, during this meeting, we have heard the views of the members of the Security Council. As an open meeting, this is truly an opportunity to listen to the views of different countries about the changing situation in my country, Syria. In that regard, I would like to share some comments on the subject we are dealing with today.

The Security Council is meeting today to discuss the twenty-eighth report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/631) on the humanitarian situation in Syria. The Council has already adopted resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015), on what has been referred to as the humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, we have not achieved the hoped-for improvement in the humanitarian situation in Syria. Syrians are therefore rightfully asking why their suffering has not been alleviated after almost five and a half years since the beginning of the international

terrorist war waged against my country by several countries, including members of the Security Council. The Ambassador of Angola was quite right in asking why we do not hold regional and international parties accountable for the continued humanitarian crisis and the international terrorist war against my country. That is a vital question that must be asked.

Bringing about a sustainable end to the suffering of the Syrian people cannot be achieved by prolonging their suffering indefinitely, or by holding them hostage to political blackmail — as certain capitals are trying to do by putting the Syrian people between a rock and a hard place and forcing them to choose between ongoing terrorism or abandoning their country to chaos. We cannot improve the situation by issuing dozens of reports or by holding periodic meetings and sensationalist conferences — nor, in fact, by providing humanitarian assistance to one region over another. However important such humanitarian assistance may be, it must be provided equally to all regions. The so-called coalition forces — led by the United States of America — will not put an end to the suffering by destroying grain silos, electrical facilities and power plants, costing the Syrian people money and effort that are difficult to repay; nor by making light of the relative geography of Syrian bloodshed; and nor by establishing dubious alliances to eliminate terrorism. Instead, it can be achieved by seriously combating terrorism, as is being done by the Syrian Government with the help of the Russian Federation, at the request of the Syrian Government itself, which has led to an improvement in the humanitarian situation in certain regions of Syria.

The solution is clear to us all, including the entire Council and Mr. O'Brien. It means dealing with the root causes of the crisis that has been imposed on the Syrian people. This is a crisis that has been imposed on — not created by — the Syrian people. Some members of this organ insistently and deliberately ignore the real cause of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and of the exacerbation of the crisis. They attempt to ignore the reasons that led a large number of Syrians to seek refuge in the areas of our country controlled by the Government and many others to do so abroad. The basic cause of this crisis is terrorism.

As we informed members at the beginning of the crisis in this very Chamber, Aleppo had not experienced any terrorist activities in the first year and a half. We had called upon Council members to assist the Syrian Government in pressuring the Government of Turkey to close the borders in order to make it impossible for terrorists to reach Aleppo. But there was no response. That led to the entry of tens of thousands of genetically modified terrorists from all over the world, who came to be called the "moderate opposition" or "non-State armed groups". Those groups did what they did in Aleppo.

In response to references made to Castello road, I would like to say that the Syrian Government has not closed that road. Instead, it is attempting to open and liberate it from the terrorists who use it to block the flow of humanitarian assistance into Aleppo and Idlib. The Government is also attempting to deny terrorists coming from Turkey entry via that road. Terrorism is the main cause of the Syrian crisis, first and foremost; furthermore, the unilateral coercive measures that have paralysed economic activity are another cause of the humanitarian crisis in my country. A sustainable solution would therefore consist in combatting terrorism by implementing the resolutions of the Security Council itself, in coordination and full cooperation with the Syrian Government and free of the double standards and hypocrisy that have been demonstrated by certain parties in the fight against terrorism. Such a solution must also avoid making Syria a magnet that would attract more terrorists.

The representative of the United States of America spoke earlier of the crimes perpetrated against a young Palestinian refugee by the Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki, a group of Turkish origin. She spoke of those who slit the throat of a child as "rebels" but she did not call them terrorists. The same holds true for other terrorist groups, including the Jaysh Al-Islam, the Jaysh Al-Fatah and others. Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other countries should end their support for the armed terrorist groups that, in certain villages of Syria, have committed atrocious acts against civilians whom they use as human shields.

They must also stop legitimizing these armed terrorist groups in Syria by referring to them as the "moderate armed opposition" or as "non-State armed groups". All such epithets seek to convey neutrality, but they are incompatible with the provisions of the Security Council's own anti-terrorism resolutions. The mere fact of not calling terrorism by its name sends a false message to hundreds of terrorist groups that their terrorism is legitimate so long as it is undertaken in defiance of the Syrian Government and they continue

to destroy infrastructure and to open the way to further human and material loss.

French aircraft recently bombed the village of Al-Tukhan, killing 164 people whom Da'esh had taken hostage and was using as human shields. But when the leaders of Da'esh heard the French President claim that he would seek vengeance for the attack in Nice, they gave orders for the village to be evacuated. Thus, the Da'esh fighters left Al-Tukhan just before the French bombing. The French airforce went ahead and bombed the village anyway, claiming twice the number of victims as the Nice attack. The President of France had sought revenge for Nice by killing 164 civilians in that Syrian village. Who used those villagers as human shields? It was Da'esh who killed civilians under the cloak of the mission of revenge launched by the French and United States airforces.

We have submitted dozens of examples of similar acts through official channels. I will not scroll through a lengthy list of names, as was done by the representative of the United States, because it would take me weeks to list all the victims of terrorist attacks in Syria. Let us instead name those who attacked Le Bataclan and the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in France, or who perpetrated the attacks in San Bernardino, Munich and Bangladesh. Why not give the names of all the groups that have committed such terrorist acts? Why not call them the "armed opposition"? Why do we say that terrorism in Syria is carried out by the moderate opposition, instead calling their attacks "terrorist acts carried out by terrorists"? There is no legitimate, halal terrorism on one side and non-legitimate terrorism on the other. It is all terrorism, and it is our people who are suffering from it.

The proof of what I am saying lies in the fact that, a few days ago, the Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki terrorist group decapitated a 12-year old Palestinian boy. In an horrific act, they cut off his head. That organization is said by certain States to belong to the moderate armed opposition. Those very same Governments have assisted such entities by providing media support since late 2011. The practices of those terrorist groups do not differ one whit from those of similar terrorist groups, including Jaysh Al-Islam, Ahrar Al-Sham, Jaysh Muhammad Abu Ubaidah Al-Muhajir, Al-Liwa Al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs' Brigade, the Army of Mujahideen, the Islamic Front, the Jaysh Al-Fatah, the Turkistan Islamic Party, the Sultan Murad Brigade and others that are described by some, both within and outside the Security Council, as a "moderate opposition army".

These entities are said to be a part of the moderate opposition, but their supporters have turned them into monsters and cannibals whose favourite pastime is to take selfies with their decapitated innocent victims, and who push people from the rooftops and burn their victims alive in Aleppo and the villages. We can never know the names of the many thousands of women and children who have been taken hostage in the cities of Syria. We will never know their names, but they are the victims of horrendous crimes against humanity. We need no investigations, evidence or police dogs to identify those responsible for those acts. We know who they are.

We cannot explain how some members of the Security Council that claim to protect human rights and the rule of law continue to prevent some of those groups from being included on the list of terrorist organizations. They know that if they were to do so they would be giving them the green light to continue to kill and decapitate. That reveals their total lack of sincerity in their fight against terrorism, which they use as a political weapon to pressure the Government of Syria, which has met its constitutional obligations with respect to protecting its citizens and combatting terrorism.

Nevertheless, we cannot work alone. We need the Council's support, and we need it to understand the scope of the threat posed by the terrorism we are facing in Syria, in the region and throughout the world. This danger is beginning to affect Council members themselves, in their own countries. I am firmly convinced that the citizens of the countries that have been engulfed by this wave of terrorist acts can legitimately ask themselves about the reasons that are leading their countries' Governments to turn a blind eye to such acts.

Talk of combating terrorism and the lifting of unilateral coercive measures brings me to the second step needed to resolve the humanitarian crisis, that is, support for a political solution, because combating terrorism can only contribute to success in that respect. The solution should ensure that there is respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, as affirmed by all relevant resolutions of the Security Council on Syria. This is in keeping with the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law, so as to ensure that

abuses and crimes that contravene these principles are not repeated, as was the case in Iraq, Libya and elsewhere.

In this regard, the Government of my country has closely read the statement issued following the visit of the American Secretary of State to Moscow on 15 July. In that statement, both parties, Russia and the United States, asserted the need to combat the terrorism fomented by the Al-Nusra Front and Da'esh. The Syrian Arab Republic, which is at the forefront in terms of combating this global scourge, welcomed the statements and reiterates that we are committed to finding a political solution to the Syrian crisis that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people and ensures their support. We are ready to pursue the inter-Syrian dialogue without any preconditions in the hope that the dialogue will lead to a comprehensive solution devised by the Syrian people themselves, without foreign interference and with the support of United Nations and the international community.

I wish to reiterate that the Syrian Government fully supports its commitment and obligation to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people. We are prepared to take every step necessary at the national level to reach that goal. We will continue to cooperate with the United Nations by facilitating its mission, but that cooperation is not just a one-way street. The United Nations also must cooperate with the Government of Syria and coordinate with it with it with regard to the various humanitarian issues rather than take issue with Syria and criticize it, which will not lead to any positive results.

The United Nations and international organizations active in Syria could not have achieved what they did over the five years of this crisis in terms of providing humanitarian assistance to millions of Syrians on a monthly basis had it not been for the cooperation, facilities and protection provided by the Syrian Government. This is not a favour we are doing, as long as Syrian people in need benefit from such humanitarian assistance and there is respect for sovereignty.

I would like to recall what was said on 12 December 2012 in Marrakesh, when an attempt was made to create an opposition. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, Mr. Fabius, said, "The jihadists are active in Syria". He said,

(*spoke in French*)

> "I cannot do anything to prevent French jihadists from going to Syria".

(*spoke in Arabic*)

That was said by a former Prime Minister. When French terrorism struck in Nice, at the Bataclan and against Charlie Hebdo, the French President took revenge by bombing the village of Manbij, killing 164 civilians.

I could say a great deal more, but owing to time constraints I will end here.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien to respond to the comments made and questions raised.

Mr. O'Brien: I shall be brief and simply seek to address some of the questions that were raised and then leave it at that.

In particular, I was asked by the representative of Spain to give a little bit more detail on the Castello road issue, and, as I said in my statement, eastern Aleppo City is currently at serious risk of besiegement, and a besieged eastern Aleppo would add at least a quarter of a million people to the current number of besieged civilians, bringing this to somewhere near 1 million people. In order to prevent this from happening, since 7 July, civilian, humanitarian and commercial movements in or out of the eastern part of Aleppo City have, as the Council is aware, come to a halt, and we need to reposition food stocks that would be sufficient for at least one month for the 150,000 people in need of food assistance in eastern Aleppo.

Basic health supplies, excluding anaesthetics and surgical items, will be sufficient for about four to five months, so long as water continues to be pumped through the water-pumping stations. The entire Aleppo City is located in eastern Aleppo, so we have tried to establish an access route across the conflict lines via our United Nations hub in the Government-controlled western Aleppo City. There is, as was referred to by another representative, some movement between east and west. A request was included in the July convoy plan and has been approved by the Syrian authorities. We have, however, not yet been able to go because of the security situation. So the question about the Castello road is an absolutely key moment, as will be clear from the point of view of why we are asking for a 48-hour humanitarian pause. Because the Castello road is now

so damaged, it cannot take large lorries, only very small lorries; so in order to get the necessary quantities, we need a longer period of time for the added number of trucks to be able to proceed and, indeed, to return once they have delivered. So that is why the Castello road issue and the clarification that was sought is so absolutely vital and therefore a crunch point.

I was also asked by the United Kingdom representative about the continuing United Nations plan on airdrops to access besieged areas and, as is well known, the United Nations is using various logistical methods to bring assistance to people in need throughout Syria by every means possible, land, sea and air. The World Food Programme, as has been noted already, has developed concrete plans for airdrops and air bridges to other locations, so International Syria Support Group members are aware of what is needed to make this a reality.

The World Food Programme has indicated that the consent of the Government of Syria and security guarantees from all parties would be a precondition; in any event, it is a precondition of the civilian operators of those proposed air operations. So we continue to plan for airdrops and air bridges, as we have said all along, but land access remains the priority. It is the safest; it is able to get much more value by far for the financial resources made available to support the provision of food and non-food items to those in humanitarian need and is therefore the most effective. It takes approximately six weeks of daily helicopter rotations to transport the equivalent amount of food that was delivered by road from Damascus to Al-Dameer on 1 June in one convoy, which was for 22,500 people. Therefore, until we have land access to reach all besieged locations, all options remain on the table. Of course, that is part of the discussion we are having with Member States to help us get the most effective and efficient access routes available. But the air plan remains.

I think the representative of the Russian Federation asked a question about safety and security in night deployment. On 29 June, we deployed a convoy to Arbin and Zamalka. Due to the process of receiving facilitation letters, the loading of the convoy could be done only in the afternoon. Therefore, while we have to look after the safety and security of our personnel, and look to all the parties to provide it, that has to apply to both night and day. I would, however, like to reiterate my call that the priority has to be for daylight movement. I repeat my thanks to the Russian Federation for its facilitation in the most recent cases in that regard. It certainly allows not only for needs assessments, but for safer and more secure delivery.

I was also asked — or at least concern was expressed — by the representative of the Russian Federation about the possibility of bias in terms of whether the United Nations was providing assistance to all the millions of people who have needs on a completely neutral and impartial basis. I would just like to reiterate my assurances that, through all the modalities that we deploy each month, our assistance is purely judged on humanitarian principles, which I think he has acknowledged. It is assessed and delivered exclusively on a needs basis. Our staff are, clearly, not only very conscious; it is part of their professional approach as the United Nations — and indeed our partners — to be impartial, neutral and independent. That is a deep principle that we as humanitarians very much know we must adopt and adhere to, as it is the licence by which we can most likely gain access in all circumstances, both now and in future.

I would repeat to the Council that we would ask all members to help us get access on that needs basis, as it has been shown that there is no equivalence — although there are many more numbers at the moment in besieged areas — with regard to areas besieged by the Government of Syria and areas besieged by other parties to the conflict. We are seeking equally to address those who are besieged in Fo'ah and Kafraya, as part of the four towns agreement, as much as we are in Deir ez-Zor, where 110,000 people besieged by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continue to be in severe humanitarian need. As I say, each and every one who has humanitarian needs is not an equivalence in terms of numbers; each and every person is being assessed irrespective of the overall quantum. Again, our assessment is always based on need.

The final point I would like to conclude with, if I may, is to welcome the fact that the broad, emerging sense that calls for a 48-hour humanitarian pause, in particular into eastern Aleppo city, seems to have caught a sense of appropriateness, proportionality, immediacy and urgency. I sense there is an amber-to-green light, if I can put it that way, within the Security Council. I would like to say how significant that would be. It would be a genuine point of progress, it would help us, through humanitarian pauses in those active areas of fighting where there is imminent besiegement affecting, as we have heard, many more hundreds of

thousands of people than we have already been dealing with, to reach those civilians trapped behind the front lines, and they could reach life-saving services, which they simply cannot access at the moment.

That is why, realistically, we need at least 72 hours' notice for a 48-hour window of calm to deliver in those locations. My team on the ground has developed a proposal, which was presented to the International Syria Support Group humanitarian task force last week, to ensure safe, periodic, facilitated humanitarian access into eastern Aleppo: a proposed 48-hour pause every mid-week, that is, eight days per month, so that cross-border actors could deliver aid for about 250,000 people, including the 150,000 already in need of food aid, and to prevent others from becoming equally vulnerable. Such a pause would rely on the United Nations monitoring mechanism that already exists with regard to access from Turkey. As I said earlier in my response to the representative of Spain, 48 hours is necessary to allow sufficient time for the smaller trucks, which we now need to use along the Castello road given its current state of damage, as well as the number of returning empty trucks to give us sufficient supplies on a regular basis. The proposed pause — and I think this is an important point to mention — would also entail a medical evacuation component, so that we not only have goods in but we have evacuations out. That was a central point of my initial remarks.

For the cross-line operation, as opposed to the cross-border, a convoy targeting 60,000 civilians, out of the 120,000 that we have requested as the United Nations, in eastern Aleppo for July has been approved by the Government of Syria. That was done prior to the escalation to Aleppo. A request for increased assistance, I suspect, will be presented as required in the coming months.

I just wanted to give that detail so that the Council is fully aware of what that would entail if that is an emerging point of consensus.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for the clarifications he has provided.

The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for asking for the floor again. I will not take too much time. I would just like to share with the members of the Security Council some information that has not been part of this meeting.

First, I regret that no one mentioned the fact that terrorists in the Wadi Barada region — outside of Damascus near Madaya, which, as some members already know is under siege, or so it is said — have bombed the only source that provides drinking water to the city of Damascus. That means that the inhabitants of Damascus, 7 million civilians, have been deprived of drinking water because the moderate armed/genetically modified armed opposition blew up the main source of water for the city.

Secondly, I would also like to remind the Council that terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria burned alive a family in a public square — father, mother and a 2-year-old child — because they wanted to escape Raqqa. No one mentioned what happened with this family or what occurred with the Wadi Barad water source, not even Mr. O'Brien.

With regard to bombing Aleppo, there are airstrikes from east Aleppo and from west Aleppo. However, Mr. O'Brien did not say who was striking from those parts of the city. They are the terrorists we are fighting — the terrorists that the Western alliance claims to be fighting. They are the terrorists who cross over from Turkey, who are financed by the corrupt regimes of the Gulf — Saudi Arabia and Qatar, to name them. Those are terrorists who are striking Aleppo from the east and the west.

We genuinely hope that, when the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs wants to talk about events in Syria and says that there is shelling, he mentions the party striking. More than 100 people were killed or injured in Damascus alone. I will send the Council official letters including the names of the victims — scores of them, women and children — killed in Damascus, in restaurants and public parks. The same goes for Aleppo. We therefore ask: who are the perpetrators? Why was that not mentioned?

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7745

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7745th meeting
Monday, 25 July 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mrs. Audouard
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Eleventh report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2016/590)

Fourth report of the Secretary General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015) (S/2016/592)

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16-23168 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Eleventh report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2016/590)

Fourth report of the Secretary General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015) (S/2016/592)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/636, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/590, which contains the eleventh report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), as well as to document S/2016/592, which contains the fourth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015).

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2299 (2016).

I now give the floor to Council members wishing to make statements after the vote.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2299 (2016) on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, given the pivotal role played by the Mission in supporting the stabilization of Iraq and helping the Government to create a better future for the Iraqi people. Egypt affirms the importance of building a more active dynamic in connection with future national reconciliation and welcomes the resolution's call for all political parties to redouble their efforts to overcome their differences and work within a comprehensive political process aimed at developing a unified national vision of reconciliation and strengthening the national unity and territorial sovereignty of Iraq by setting aside their factional and sectarian differences.

Egypt also takes this opportunity to welcome the military, financial and logistical support provided by the international community to the Government of Iraq, in particular by the brother State of Kuwait, which granted Iraq's request that it defer repayment of its debts to that country until 1 July 2018, taking into account the Government of Iraq's numerous obligations under paragraph 21 of resolution 1483 (2003), which calls on Iraq to deposit 5 per cent of its petroleum proceeds into the Compensation Fund established in accordance with resolution 687 (1991).

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7746

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7746th meeting
Tuesday, 26 July 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Sambou
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2016/598)

Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2016/599)

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16-23526 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2016/598)

Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2016/599)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/637, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2016/598 and S/2016/599, which contain the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus and the report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, respectively.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I should like to inform the Council that the presidency of the Council has met with the representatives of the parties, who have confirmed that they maintain their well-known positions vis-à-vis the item on the Council's agenda. On the basis of those meetings, with the consent of the members of the Council, the presidency has drawn the conclusion that the Council can proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution before it.

If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2300 (2016).

The meeting rose at 3.05 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7747

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7747th meeting

Tuesday, 26 July 2016, 3.05 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Sambou
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Special Report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (S/2016/565)

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16-23532 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (S/2016/565)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/638, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/565, which contains the special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2301 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to the member of the Council who wishes to make a statement following the voting.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): The Security Council has just adopted resolution 2301 (2016), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We welcome the fact that, by adopting the resolution unanimously, the Council has sent a united message of its support for MINUSCA and for the Central African Republic.

The challenge in the negotiations that have come to an end today was to adapt MINUSCA's mandate to the new circumstances in the country. With the transition having succeeded, stabilization must now succeed. It is an ambitious undertaking — to be met first and foremost by the country's new democratically elected authorities. There are many programmes to be put in place in order to address the root causes of the conflict in the country. In that major taks, the authorities of the Central African Republic can count on MINUSCA's support via an expanded mandate. As everyone can see, we have tried to organize the mandate so as to provide greater clarity, in large part to align it with the various stages of implementation. As was the case last year, we have encouraged the Secretary-General to provide MINUSCA with the necessary resources in line with the restructured mandate.

This is a big job, but with MINUSCA's nearly 13,000 uniformed personnel and significant civilian component, the Mission has the capability to carry it out. The Mission must establish its authority and credibility, especially when it comes to the armed groups or anyone who may attempt to derail the political process.

Finally, we riteraterate our confidence in, and support for, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Parfait Onanga-Anyanga.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the successful initiatives that you have undertaken during your presidency of the Security Council, including the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). I convey to you the gratitude of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic. Likewise, I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Security Council for their unanimous support for resolution 2301 (2016), initiated by France.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council has today decided to renew the mandate of MINUSCA. The resolution is quite comprehensive and reflects

the level of ambition we have for this United Nations Mission. The Mission's presence in the Central African Republic is essential for the stability of the country and of the civilian population. All the provisions of the text are important, but I want especially to highlight several points.

First, with regard to the protection of civilians, this is the first aspect of the mandate — and it is no coincidence. Although the situation is not comparable to what it was a few months ago, civilians in fact continue to be threatened in their security by the numerous armed criminal groups operating throughout the entire country. In that context, it is essential and vital that MINUSCA be active, even proactive, in its mandate to protect civilians. The Mission must anticipate situations and, where threats exist, intervene robustly and without delay. Members will recall that President Faustin Archange Touadera came specially to the Security Council on 10 June to participate in the debate on the protection of civilians and deliver that very message (see S/PV.7711).

Secondly, with regard to neutralizing armed groups, we welcome that the resolution makes the goal of reducing the threat posed by such groups a strategic objective at the heart of the mandate. To that end, we will have to implement a comprehensive strategy consisting of various steps. That, too, is a primary objective of President Touadera, but he will need robust and determined action by MINUSCA to bring that about. Reforming the security sector, restoring State authority in the country, carrying out the disarmament programme and restoring public order and justice are all top Government priorities for which we will rely on MINUSCA.

Thirdly, with regard to temporary emergency measures, this will be something new for MINUSCA. We welcome that this is included in the mandate with stronger language, as it is essential that such measures be further implemented. President Touadera asked for this, and it has been done. We now hope that the temporary emergency measures will be implemented with determination.

Much has been accomplished in recent months. A year ago the Bangui Forum had just concluded weeks of local consultations, where hundreds of Central Africans were brought together from every province and commitments were made. The Forum was followed by the successful holding of presidential and legislative elections under very good conditions. The transition phase was a success, and we must now move on to the stabilization phase. We then had to adapt the MINUSCA mandate to the new circumstances on the ground. The Secretary-General proposed in his special report (S/2016/565) guidelines that provided a very good basis for doing so, and they are now reflected in the resolution.

In his comprehensive briefing on 8 July (see S/PV.7734), the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations rightly urged the international community not to repeat past mistakes because, since the mutinies of 1996, which led to the deployment the first United Nations mission in the Central African Republic, no serious analysis of the post-conflict situation had been made. It was enough of a lull for one to think that all was well. And from the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, today we have MINUSCA. If we want to avoid such mistakes and relapses and to ensure that MINUSCA is the last United Nations mission in the Central African Republic, it must provide the new authorities with the resources to match the actions they want to take to pull the country and the people out of this state of total deprivation and psychosis — this sword of Damocles hanging over our heads.

May the unfailing mobilization and the outstanding solidarity enjoyed by the Central African Republic during its darkest moments manifest themselves once again at the donors conference scheduled for November. The Central African Republic is at a turning point in its history. We must and expect to shoulder the immense task before us, and we are delighted to continue to have the support of the United Nations and the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7748

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7748th meeting
Wednesday, 27 July 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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16-23736 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Attacks by Boko Haram continue, mainly in north-eastern Nigeria and southern Niger, and to a lesser extent in northern Cameroon and the Lac region of Chad. Terrorists persist in targeting innocent civilians, often using young children. Despite commendable regional efforts, the group continues to threaten regional stability, as illustrated by the 3 June attack on a military base in Bosso town, south-eastern Niger.

Lake Chad Basin countries face a serious humanitarian crisis. Significant numbers of refugees and internally displaced people add pressure on host communities that are already food-insecure. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien, will brief the Council on the humanitarian challenges.

The United Nations has received reports of an increase in the number of incidents of sexual and gender-based violence among the displaced. In Nigeria, the Protection Working Group, comprising the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Nigerian National Human Rights Commission, reports rape and sexual abuse in almost half of the 26 sites covered.

In Cameroon, allegations of human rights abuses committed by security forces persist, especially against youth belonging to Muslim communities in the north. Vigilante groups going after suspected suicide bombers have injured innocent civilians.

To protect human rights, the States concerned must ensure accountability for serious violations by national forces and that the use of force is in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. States must adopt measures to protect civilians and respect due process when dealing with persons arrested for Boko Haram-related charges. Children used by Boko Haram should be treated as victims and dealt with in accordance with international standards for juvenile justice. We welcome the establishment of a human rights desk by the Nigerian army to investigate allegations of human rights violations committed by its forces, and we encourage other affected countries to institute similar mechanisms.

The Boko Haram crisis has devastated the region's economy. Economic growth has dropped sharply with the decline in the price of oil and other commodities. Decreasing resources affect States' ability to deliver basic social services and to pay the salaries of security forces and civil servants.

Insecurity has disrupted trade routes between Chad and Nigeria, interrupting the supply of basic goods and resulting in price hikes. Youth unemployment is at a worrisome high, providing a recruitment ground for Boko Haram. We urge that military operations be complemented with development interventions, including to address the effects of climate change.

We commend the Lake Chad Basin countries' efforts to combat Boko Haram. The regional offensive involving Chadian, Cameroonian, Nigerien and Nigerian troops operating under the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has recaptured 80 per cent of the areas once under Boko Haram control, freed thousands of captives and prevented terrorist attacks.

I returned yesterday after visiting a number of Central and West African countries. As part of my tour, I met with President Idriss Deby Itno in N'Djamena and visited MNJTF headquarters. MNJTF's main challenge remains a severe lack of funding. The 1 February African Union donor conference aimed to mobilize $750 million, of which only $250 million was pledged; even less was disbursed. The success of MNJTF operations also depends on timely and actionable intelligence as well as specialized counter-terrorism skills and equipment, given the evolving tactics of Boko Haram.

So far, the Lake Chad Basin countries have borne the financial responsibility of combating Boko Haram despite their own economic crises. As President Deby Itno explained to me with frustration, they have been forced to divert national spending away from basic services to security. Lake Chad Basin leaders have expressed their growing impatience over delays by international partners to support the MNJTF financially.

I commend the United Kingdom for its financial support to the MNJTF and welcome the European Union's intention to commit funds for the operationalization of the force. I urge the international community to support the MNJTF through the mobilization of the required political, logistical and financial support.

The United Nations supports national and regional efforts to prevent and combat terrorism and to ensure that the perpetrators of terrorism are brought to justice. However, counter-terrorist operations must abide by the rule of law and international human rights norms. MNJTF commanders reassured me that every effort was being made to protect human rights, including by the deployment of dedicated personnel to monitor human rights issues.

Further to the Council's request to extend the Integrated Assistance on Countering Terrorism (I-ACT) initiative to the Group of Five (G-5) Sahel region, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) is working closely with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to develop the G-5 Sahel I-ACT In this regard, CTITF, accompanied by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, will meet G-5 representatives from 30 August to 1 September in Nouakchott to produce the outline of a capacity-building framework for counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, including concrete regional projects.

The Chairman of the Counter-Terrorism Committee will also visit the Lake Chad Basin countries in October, accompanied by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel, CTED, CTITF and the Special Representative of the African Union for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation. In Central Africa, the United Nations Centre for Counter-Terrorism supports the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to implement the Central Africa counter-terrorism strategy. It will meet with partners in the fall to discuss specific projects.

A military approach, while essential, will not bring an end to the Boko Haram threat. Affected countries must tackle not only the humanitarian consequences, but also the root causes that contributed to the emergence of the group, including the social, economic and political grievances of marginalized communities. The Special Representatives for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel continue to encourage regional interlocutors to address the Boko Haram crisis holistically and beyond an exclusively security-oriented lens. Lake Chad Basin countries need our support so that military operations are followed by stabilization measures and the restoration of State authority.

The Second Regional Security Summit for the Lake Chad Basin, held on 14 May in Abuja, reaffirmed the need to address the root causes. Among a number of noteworthy recommendations, the Summit encouraged affected countries to utilize the services of community and religious leaders to discourage impressionable youth from being radicalized and to lead deradicalization programmes. The Summit took note of the negative consequences of climate change, affecteing the livelihoods of those who depend on Lake Chad, in particular young people. The Summit urged the concerned countries and partners to support the restoration of Lake Chad as part of a strategy to combat Boko Haram.

The United Nations stands ready to support the Lake Chad Basin countries in addressing both the consequences and the root causes of Boko Haram. We encourage the leaders of the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States to hold their long-planned joint Ministerial Summit to adopt a common regional strategy to address the crisis. The Security Council's support would help underscore the urgency of the matter.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin. I also thank my colleague, Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, and endorse his clear and powerful statement.

The Lake Chad Basin region, which hosts Africa's fastest growing displacement crisis, needs our urgent, united and collective attention. Violence and brutality to the most heinous, barbaric and unconscionable extent — almost unimaginable — as perpetrated by Boko Haram are resulting in massive forced displacement, human rights violations, severe disruptions to livelihoods, and unprecedented humanitarian needs in a region that was already endemically and deeply vulnerable.

As I witnessed during my travels to north-east Nigeria and south-east Niger and their capitals just a few weeks ago in May, boundless insecurity has deepened the vulnerability of communities in that fragile region, which was already impacted by severe climate, climate change, progressive desertification, environmental degradation — including the massive drying-up of Lake Chad itself, straddling the unpoliceable borders of four countries — the highest population growth in the world, and our planet's most widespread, chronic and deepest extreme poverty. The region remains precarious for every one of the millions of our fellow human beings there, and the current exacerbated crisis vastly surpasses the capacity of national and local authorities to respond. People across the Lake Chad Basin desperately need our help.

Across the Lake Chad Basin, spanning parts of Nigeria, the Niger, Chad and Cameroon, the United Nations estimates that over 9 million people need humanitarian assistance. About 2.8 million of these people have been displaced, fleeing violent attacks in their towns and villages. They include people like 52-year-old grandfather Mustafa, newly relocated into a 7x7-foot wood and sheeting shelter, after having fled from his torched lifetime house in Bama 11 months earlier, when Boko Haram brutes ransacked his village. He bravely held his shard of mirror to tell me he was still trying to be the barber he had always been, but his stoicism could not hold back the tears provoked by his fears or his plea for our help.

Many are in camps, where living conditions are grim, but the vast majority are living with host communities that are themselves among the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, living in the Sahel zone which faces chronic drought and food insecurity that place over 1 million children's lives at risk year in, year out. Using next season's seeds to feed those they have taken in, hundreds of thousands of farmers have missed three successive years of planting, leaving them without any stocks or income whatsoever to live on.

Vital trade routes have been severely disrupted, leaving an estimated 5.2 million people severely food insecure. People in the Lake Chad Basin are some of the toughest in the world. They are used to coping with extreme hardship, exploiting every and any option they can to keep their families going. But as many of the affected people themselves told me during my visit, this suffering has pushed them to the absolute limit; it is unlike anything they have felt before. Personally, I have been traveling throughout that region on and off for the past 37 years, and I have never heard such fear and desperation. This is a new terrible.

Children are particularly vulnerable, especially the 1.7 million who have been displaced across the Lake Chad Basin. Children risk being abducted and forcibly recruited by Boko Haram to take part in the violence, including by acting as suicide bombers. From January to June this year, more than 50 children have been coerced into carrying out suicide bombings across the four countries. Gender-based violence and sexual exploitation are widespread, and women and girls are at great risk of forced abduction into sexual slavery.

Nigeria is bearing the brunt of the crisis, despite the significant efforts undertaken by the federal and local authorities to address this burgeoning catastrophe. Seven million of the nine million people in need across the Lake Chad Basin are in Nigeria. As the Nigerian army has progressively regained control of a number of towns and villages in Borno state, up in its north-east centred round Maiduguri, aid agencies have gradually been able to access new areas. What we have uncovered and assessed is deeply, distressingly alarming even for those of us who have witnessed such depths of humanitarian need before..

Last month, the Nigerian authorities rightly declared a nutrition emergency for Borno state. Direct reports from the field indicate that affected communities are rapidly running out of food. We have no time to lose. The lean season, which puts millions at real risk of hunger and malnutrition each year across the Lake Chad Basin region, has already started. If we do not act now, the human suffering will only become more extreme. Children are no exception. UNICEF reports that in Borno state alone, 244,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Among them, almost one in five risks death this year if they are not

treated. That is 134 children dying each day from a preventable condition. We have to stop this — and we can with will, money, urgency and coordination.

While the sheer number of people suffering is mainly in Nigeria, all of the affected countries are deeply vulnerable. In the Niger, one single attack by Boko Haram left over 70,000 people displaced in Bosso town in June, bringing the total number of displaced people in the Diffa region to over 160,000. The Niger is the poorest country in the world; yet despite living on virtually nothing, families there have welcomed the displaced into their homes and shared their meagre supplies of food and water with the newcomers, as I saw for myself with utter humility and total admiration, in equal parts, when I visited Fatimah in Diffa, who had voluntarily taken in two families, 11 people in all, sharing her diminishing staple food supplies and her very modest home.

Needs are also dire in Chad's Lac region, where there are over 60,000 registered displaced persons, and tens of thousands who have not yet been registered. In the Far North region of Cameroon, which has been under a state of emergency and lock-down for security reasons, the number of people in need of immediate food assistance has quadrupled since June 2015, to over 200,000 today, and the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) increased in the same period to around 190,000. Severe acute malnutrition rates for children under 5 have surpassed the emergency threshold in the three neighbouring countries, as is the case in Nigeria. And the three departments along the east of Cameroon were already food-insecure because of taking in over a quarter of a million refugees from Central African Republic's violent conflict over the past two years, with as yet few of those people returning to that country.

Humanitarian actors have been scaling up their assistance, despite a dangerous operating environment. Since January, the humanitarian country team has been able to reach 2 million people with primary health-care outpatient services in north-east Nigeria, including close to 91,500 people in the areas of Borno state, where the State has re-established a presence. As of the end of June, the World Food Programme (WFP) had provided 54,000 children at risk of malnutrition with supplementary food, and the agency is targeting 1 million people for food assistance this year. In the first half of 2016, 148,000 girls and boys were reached with psychosocial support through child-friendly spaces across the four affected countries. However, as is clear, considerably more needs to be done — and now.

Humanitarian agencies are taking a regional approach. Last week, the humanitarian country teams in Cameroon and Nigeria partnered to provide vital cross-border assistance to people in Banki, Nigeria, where up to 20,000 IDPs had been cut off from aid since last year. The food and relief items were transported by road from Cameroon and then distributed by WFP staff from Nigeria, in close cooperation with national authorities in both countries.

It is urgent that we continue those efforts and complement them with increased development assistance. We must be ready to capitalize on the advances made by the Nigerian State to regain control of territory, as evidenced by the recent reopening of the road leading east from Maiduguri to Dikwa, along which I could not travel even on 19 May. That is essential to promote trade and income generation along that vital road axis. But we must be clear — to ourselves and to the Nigerian Government also: this is not just a security issue. The Lake Chad Basin, and the protracted violence of the terrorists of Boko Haram, is for the millions of people there, caught up in this for years, as much, or now even more, a humanitarian catastrophe as it is a security priority. We, the international community and the Nigerian Government, must act accordingly.

Protection must be at the core of the humanitarian response, particularly for women and children, who are at severe risk of exploitation and abuse. Without more help, villagers are left to defend themselves. In the town of Baga Sola in Chad, villagers have erected their own checkpoint to try to fend off further attacks. It is nothing more than a flimsy rope. Said a youth manning it,

> "We are unarmed, so if anybody comes with explosives or attacks us, we will hold him down until the police arrives".

The affected countries have themselves recognized and drawn attention to those protection concerns. Last month, the Governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger held a regional protection dialogue and agreed on a set of comprehensive actions to enhance protection and respond to the most urgent needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and other affected populations. I commend the four countries for that strong initiative, and urge them to fully implement the commitments made.

Despite the best efforts by the regional authorities and humanitarian actors to expand their reach and scale up life-saving assistance, the means to support the humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria, and throughout the Lake Chad Basin, do not match the staggering scale of need. The 2016 humanitarian response plan for Nigeria is only 28 per cent funded, while those for the Niger, Cameroon and Chad are similarly underfunded. In noting that the United Kingdom has provided $18.5 million in humanitarian support for people in the Lake Chad Basin States, I earnestly appeal again to Member States to make their first, or to increase their contribution, to the ongoing humanitarian operation rapidly — and now.

Earlier this month, at the initiative of the humanitarian community, including the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator and the country teams in Nigeria, the Niger, Cameroon and Chad, developed a 90-day plan highlighting the priority humanitarian needs. A united call for $221 million in funding between July and the end of September to address life-saving needs was made. I welcome the generous new pledges and contributions that have been made following the release of the 90-day plan. That adds to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allocation of $13 million for Nigeria that I approved at the end of June — and the nearly $90 million already provided by the CERF to the Lake Chad Basin since last year. The scale of CERF's allocation is something of a record in terms of the quantum for one, albeit regional, crisis. CERF funds are being made available nimbly and rapidly, which I judge to be wholly necessary and proportionate. But — please note — it is intended to jump-start, not be a substitute for, Member State contributions.

I am working with my counterparts in humanitarian agencies to take measures to continue to quickly scale up capacity at the field level, where it is most required. That includes deploying additional United Nations staff, establishing operational hubs, mobilizing relief supplies and deploying international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which is central to the response. Agencies such as UNICEF, the WFP and the International Organization for Migration, as well as their NGO partners, have ambitious scale-up plans that require urgent resources to implement.

We urgently need to strengthen international attention to this neglected crisis. For months, I have been shouting into what feels like an empty room to highlight the dire situation in the Lake Chad Basin. My trip to the region in May was part of that effort. Ambassador Power's visit to the region in April was also vital in shedding light on this dreadful situation. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the United States and the European Commission for partnering with the United Nations and the affected countries on an event focused on the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin during the Economic and Social Council session one month ago. It was also highlighted in a packed side-event at the World Humanitarian Summit on 23 May.

We all know that the humanitarian response in itself is insufficient to re-establish people's lives and livelihoods. We must move from delivering aid to ending need — a crucial outcome endorsed at the World Humanitarian Summit. That means that, in parallel to providing life-saving assistance and protection, which we as humanitarians do, we need a concerted effort with political actors to address the root causes of the violence, as Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman highlighted moments ago. To move from delivering aid to ending need, we must work with development partners to address the drivers of vulnerability across the region. It is also important to recognize that national authorities in the four countries have been investing in ensuring greater security for their people, but that they cannot do it alone. We need to give them our support and partnership in this effort.

Finally, during my mission, I visited a camp in Konduga, Nigeria, that hosts some 1,600 displaced people. During my visit, I met a group of displaced women and men who had fled from Bama, some 35 kilometres away. As we sat on the ground, Aissa, Amina, Falmata and Bukar — all of whom had had to flee Bama — described vividly how venturing outside the camp to fetch firewood carried the risk of attack or abduction by Boko Haram, and how they continued to live in abject fear. They also shared with me their concerns for their children, who were not getting enough food and no longer went to school.

These displaced persons who I met, and so many others affected by this crisis, desperately need assistance and protection. In the camp, I witnessed not only human suffering, but also the aspirations of so many individuals and families to a better future — or perhaps I should say to be more accurate, a future. They are looking to the United Nations, to the Security Council and to all of us for urgently needed help. It is within our power to be relevant, and to do the right

thing for our fellow human beings who need us most requires our determination, our decision and the will to provide— in very real resources — the means. I urge the Security Council today not to fail the people in and around the Lake Chad Basin.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for agreeing to hold this meeting at our request. I also thank Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien for their highly effective briefings today.

I would like to begin with the harrowing words of Stefan Heunis, a photographer working for Agence France-Presse who visited a camp for internally displaced people near Maiduguri in Nigeria. Stefan wrote this in his blog earlier today:

> "The camp is now home to nearly 16,000 people and is growing by the day. You can practically taste the despair — there is no food, few opportunities and no shade. Flies looking for moisture in the dry heat pester the eyes and mouths of women and children too weak to swat them away. What strikes me most about severe acute malnutrition is the deformation it causes. The head becomes much bigger in proportion to the body, and the angular changes of the skeleton. Bones start protruding from under the skin, almost piercing it."

This humanitarian nightmare is the direct consequence of Boko Haram. They are a group that we are all familiar with. We all called out in unison for the return of those young women from Chibok. We all demanded: "Bring back our girls!". But now, over two years on, can we say that we have really maintained our focus? Today is our chance to bring overdue attention back to this crisis.

The plight of the people of the Lake Chad Basin is almost beyond comprehension. Because of Boko Haram's anarchy, millions across the region now require urgent humanitarian assistance. Around 800,000 people are living on the verge of famine, and for many, I fear that we are simply too late. So many of those in need are children. As Stephen said, UNICEF estimates that as many as a quarter of a million children are now suffering from severe acute malnutrition in Borno state. Around one in five will die if they do not receive urgent treatment. So, we must act fast, and I thank you again, Mr. President, for convening this meeting so speedily. I see three priorities ahead.

First, strong clear leadership from the United Nations is needed to coordinate the international effort, particularly given the challenging conditions on the ground and the continued instability. We strongly support the work already done by the United Nations, including to raise the international profile of the plight of these communities, but it is also imperative that the international community and the Governments of the region redouble their efforts to support the United Nations, so that together we can significantly scale up the delivery of urgently needed support. That means putting our hands in our pockets.

The United Kingdom was one of the first donors to respond to this crisis, and I thank Stephen for acknowledging that fact. In 2015, we provided $32 million in humanitarian assistance in the Niger, Chad and northern Cameroon, and this year we have already provided an additional $34 million. In Nigeria, we have provided nearly $11 million to support conflict-affected people in the north-east and will provide an additional $42 million over the next three years. We are currently considering where we could do more, and I hope that others around this table will do the same. We look to the United Nations for further details on the priority needs in the region and how we can best support their plans for their response. But we know that this is not just about money, so we strongly support the deployment of additional United Nations staff to the region, particularly those with relevant experience in dealing with such complex ongoing humanitarian crises.

My second point is about protection, which must be at the centre of our response to this crisis. So many people in the Lake Chad Basin have suffered at the hands of Boko Haram and fled their towns and villages in response, so it is vital that the displaced be returned to their homes only when it is safe to do so. We encourage all actors to work together to report, mitigate and address protection violations against displaced people, refugees and other vulnerable groups. We support the work being done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Governments of the region on this issue.

My third and final point is that while it is vital that we treat the symptoms of this crisis and quickly, we also need to address the root causes. That means stopping the conflict. Defeating Boko Haram across the region will

require a comprehensive approach that builds stability, tackles extremist narratives and addresses the root causes of instability, including economic and political development. It is a comprehensive approach that needs to put the protection and empowerment of women at its centre, combatting the misogyny and oppression that are so ingrained in violent extremism. It is an approach that needs to offer something that the extremists can never provide — the rule of law. For that reason, it is vital that any action against Boko Haram be fully compliant with human rights standards. Ultimately, it is a comprehensive approach that we all need to support.

As Jeff kindly highlighted, the United Kingdom has provided $6.5 million to the Multinational Joint Task Force, and we are also providing military intelligence and humanitarian and development support to Nigeria. I hope that all members of the Council will play their part to tackle both the humanitarian crisis and the scourge that has created it. I look forward to hearing from all gathered here about how, between us, we can step up.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today's briefings, in addition to that held in May under the Egyptian presidency (see S/PV.7699), based on the Spanish initiative regarding the challenges facing the Sahel region and Africa, have demonstrated the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. Indeed, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin face various interconnected and complex challenges related to insecurity in northern Mali and Libya; the growth of organized crime, particularly trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings; and the increase of terrorism in the region, notably as perpetrated by Boko Haram.

In addition, new, non-traditional challenges have arisen. Climate change has had an impact on the way of life and the socioeconomic situation of the region, as have humanitarian challenges in the form of displacement of some 4.2 million people from the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin and the need of 2.9 million people for emergency humanitarian assistance, as Mr. O'Brien mentioned.

Egypt supports all efforts undertaken by the countries of the Lake Chad basin and Benin, members of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), to combat Boko Haram. Egypt commends the leadership shown by the countries of the region to counter this threat. On this point, the latest military operations of the MNJTF have weakened Boko Haram and made it possible to arrest many of its members. We welcome the fact that the Force has fulfilled its role and carried out its mission in accordance with international humanitarian law and international law and in full compliance with human rights. However, in spite of the achievements of the Force in fighting Boko Haram, it still requires the support of the international community, as noted by the representative of the United Kingdom, so that the Force can restore security in the Lake Chad basin.

Egypt encourages all regional and international partners to provide increased support to the Multinational Joint Task Force, especially in the areas of training and capacity-building and in terms of equipment and logistics. Egypt also urges all partners to fulfil the pledges they made at the donor conference for the Multinational Joint Task Force, held in Addis Ababa in February, towards the establishment of a trust fund for the support of African Union forces. With regard to support for the MNJTF, Egypt will work to ensure that the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa, created in Cairo, will work at the regional level to provide African solutions for African problems.

We are profoundly worried about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin and in the Sahel. We stress the importance of undertaking greater efforts to find a response to this humanitarian crisis and focus on both the humanitarian and political aspects of the crisis. We also reiterate our appeal for a holistic approach, including focus on political, military, humanitarian and development dimensions, in addressing the problems facing the countries of the Lake Chad Basin. Egypt has consistently supported a comprehensive approach to dealing with and overcoming the phenomenon of terrorism and restoring peace by investing in the institutional and human resources of the region. This is the topic that the Security Council will consider tomorrow during the ministerial debate on peacebuilding in Africa.

Dealing with the humanitarian crisis in the region requires putting the crisis at the top of the list of priorities of the international community and shedding light on its scope and impact and on the suffering it has caused to people in the region. It is also important to call upon all international and regional partners to supply the resources needed to lessen the suffering of millions of women, children and displaced persons. We call on tomorrow's meeting to focus on development

and humanitarian aspects with a view to ensuring security for areas liberated from Boko Haram.

Finally, the crisis in the Lake Chad basin requires the solidarity of the international community and coordination of efforts by the United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations as well as Governments of the region, based on the various cooperation and coordination mechanisms. Egypt stands ready to step up its cooperation with the Governments of the Lake Chad basin countries through the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development in order to put an end to the interconnected crises that the region is experiencing.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We start by commending the delegation of the United Kingdom for calling for the convening of today's meeting. We thank the Under-Secretaries-General for Political and Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, respectively, for their insightful briefings on a critical situation prevailing in the Lake Chad Basin, a region in the heart of Africa facing huge challenges that threaten the very existence of Lake Chad and the survival of millions of people living on it shores. It is our hope and expectation that today's meeting will further contribute to sensitizing world public opinion and the international community to this very serious issue.

The challenges facing the region are of three distinct but often interrelated natures: environmental degradation due to climate change and human actions; security threats linked to poverty, unemployment, youth radicalization and terrorism; and the huge humanitarian crisis unfolding against the backdrop of high rates of population growth, extreme poverty, and the food and nutrition crisis.

Lake Chad's resources benefit around 20 million people living on its shores in four countries. The lake supports the peasant economy of local people who see their sources of livelihood in peril and the lake at the brink of ecological disaster, as it has become a tiny fraction of its former size. A set of factors such as shifting climate patterns and human activities, namely, the diversion of large quantities of water from inflowing rivers, the irrigation for crop production and an increasing population's demand for water, have had a strong impact on and triggered the diminution of the lake's size. Several initiatives at the national and regional levels aimed at managing the lake's shrinking water resources and at reversing the trend towards its extinction have been undertaken. These initiatives are a demonstration of the concern by the people, Governments and the international community with respect to the current state of affairs.

The Lake Chad Basin Commission, a regional initiative established with the objectives of, inter alia, regulating and controlling the use of water and other natural resources in the basin, while relatively active and having made some achievements, has not delivered visible improvements in the lake's water replenishment. The Lake Chad Basin Commission has developed the Lake Chad replenishment project with the objective of regenerating the lake through the transfer of 900 cubic metres per second of water from the Ubangi River by way of a navigable channel to Lake Chad aimed at reversing land and water degradation and reviving the lake's ecosystem. Being an ambitious project, it has the potential to radically change the current situation in the Basin and the lives of its populations.

The countries of the region should assume their irrevocable responsibilities and strengthen their political will in order to mobilize the international community, which should seriously consider extending tangible support to the project. If the current situation is not rapidly reversed, it has the potential to become yet another hotbed of crisis and conflict and a real threat to regional and international peace and security. In short, the Lake Chad Basin is no longer able to secure the livelihoods of the people living on its shores, a state of affairs that is triggering a threatening security situation and the current humanitarian crisis.

The security situation in the Lake Chad Basin has continuously deteriorated over the past few years, against the backdrop of shrinking resources. Poverty and joblessness create a reservoir of radicalization, violent extremism and willing recruits for the terrorists. The seven-year-old Boko Haram insurgency that spread from Nigeria into Chad, the Niger and Cameroon prompted countries bordering Lake Chad to join forces in the Multinational Joint Task Force, on the understanding that a collaborative and cooperative regional approach would be the most effective way of denying safe havens to the terrorists, whilst strengthening those countries' military capabilities to face and defeat Boko Haram. The Multinational Joint Task Force was endorsed by the African Union in January 2015, and the Security Council commended Lake Chad Basin countries and Benin for their efforts to operationalize the Multinational Joint Task Force.

Despite progress in the fight against Boko Haram, the terrorists are still active in the region, intensifying asymmetric attacks and continuing their rampage of terror, death and destruction. It is imperative that the international community support the Multinational Task Force and the countries of the region in consolidating the gains achieved to date in the fight against terrorism in the region.

The recurring nature of food insecurity and poverty in the region requires a concerted effort to assist the most vulnerable, prevent severe hunger and malnutrition and ensure that communities in distress are able to recover. Although the Governments of the region are making efforts to address humanitarian challenges with the international community's support, the sheer scale of the crisis, its complexity and its potential for further deterioration call for a renewed sense of urgency.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the number of displaced people in the most affected areas has risen from 1.6 million to 2.4 million, while food insecurity and malnutrition have rapidly grown worse. Women and children represent a majority of the displaced as Boko Haram attacks continue and military operations intensify. Now more than ever, the humanitarian community is called to protect and assist people displaced by conflict and the communities hosting them.

In conclusion, it is crucial that Member States in the Lake Chad Basin region continue their joint efforts to address the multiple challenges affecting the region. Angola fully supports regional and international efforts to rehabilitate Lake Chad and give new hope to extremely distressed populations, as well as to combat terrorism until Boko Haram is defeated and to provide assistance to the millions of people in desperate need in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I too thank Stephen O'Brien and Jeff Feltman for their presentations on this issue, which is so important to us all. Mr. O'Brien's accounts of the situation in the Lake Chad region in the areas affected by Boko Haram are appalling. Vulnerable populations, including children, young girls and women in particular, are the target of heinous acts. In addition, we remain extremely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in those countries. We need to address the plight of the people by making every effort to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches them. The needs are enormous, as working conditions for humanitarian actors remain particularly difficult and Boko Haram is a long way from being defeated, despite the progress achieved. I take this opportunity to salute the courage and commitment of humanitarian actors working under these conditions.

The humanitarian consequences of the actions of Boko Haram, recalled earlier by Stephen O'Brien, are considerable. However, the figures are alarming, since the threat affects nearly 20 million people. There are three times more displaced people today than there were two years ago. It is the fastest growing displacement crisis in Africa. People affected by the crisis require urgent assistance in the form of food, water, shelter, health care, protection and education. Stephen O'Brien told us earlier that 5 million people are in a situation of food insecurity. In Borno state alone, nearly half a million people are deemed to be at the emergency stage — that is to say, very close to starvation. According to UNICEF, 50,000 children are likely to die of malnutrition if they do not receive treatment.

We have, of course, the duty to assist them, but this also means that Boko Haram must be fought with the utmost firmness. The countries of the Lake Chad Basin have taken the initiative to unite their efforts in the framework of a joint multinational force, and we welcome this approach. We support this effort both militarily and financially. France actively supports the operations against Boko Haram carried out by countries in the region. We bring intelligence to the benefit of the countries involved, in addition to logistical support to Chad and Niger by providing equipment and training to the Cameroonian forces. We are all allies in the fight against terrorists and such criminals, whatever form terrorism takes and wherever it occurs.

The ongoing military operations against Boko Haram have already proved their effectiveness. Today, Boko Haram no longer controls territory and has retreated into its safe havens. These important achievements owe a great deal to the work of military forces from Chad and Nigeria. Many soldiers of these armies have already paid the price in blood in the regional offensive, and France respectfully pays tribute to them. The fight against Boko Haram is far from over. The offensive campaign waged by the countries of the region will continue, and it is our duty to support it.

It is equally essential that the fight against Boko Haram be complemented forthwith by development

policies in the affected regions. Without them, this criminal movement will continue to thrive on poverty and the feeling of exclusion that feeds it. France too is involved in that effort; the President of the Republic launched a Lake Chad initiative, which has been implemented by the French Development Agency at the regional level.

In closing, I recall that international humanitarian law applies to all parties. The United Nations and its partners should have access to all persons in need, including displaced persons. We call for immediate, safe and unconditional access to populations in need.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having accepted the request of the British delegation to convene this important open meeting on one of the most sensitive regions of Africa and the world. I also thank both of this morning's briefers, Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien, for their presentations and for the updated information they kindly brought to our attention.

The Lake Chad Basin is one of the parts of Africa where the changes in the characteristics of the physical environment have an impact not only on the daily lives of people but also on the security and stability of the countries that surround it. My country, Senegal, well aware of the many benefits of the joint management of shared natural areas, including rivers and basins, has made inter-State cooperation on water a fundamental pillar of its foreign policy. In that spirit, Senegal launched its Water, Peace and Security initiative, which it intends to promote at the international level, including in the Security Council. Our meeting today confirms the relevance of such an initiative.

Materially, the people of the Lake Chad Basin are imperilled by the drastic shrinkage of the lake due to drought, desertification, climate change and the overexploitation of natural resources. Those phenomena have increased the vulnerability of the inhabitants and aggravated social conflicts over the access, use and sharing of resources from the Lake Chad Basin. This tragic situation has transformed the area into fertile ground for the infiltration and extremist activity of violent terrorist groups, the notorious Boko Haram first among them. In that regard, my delegation recognizes and supports the cooperative efforts of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to address together both the structural and cyclical challenges facing them, in addition to the rampant insecurity, new threats and duress caused by the ongoing attacks and kidnappings perpetrated by Boko Haram.

The concerted response of the countries of the region, with the support of the African Union, subregional organizations and the international community is beginning to show results, in particular the meaningful military successes carried out by the by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). But the countries in the region require additional logistical, financial and even human support, including in the area of intelligence, if they are to more effectively address the numerous challenges facing them with respect to security, humanitarian needs and sustainable development.

According to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/566), the number of displaced persons in the Lake Chad Basin is now 2.4 million people. These displaced persons, most of whom are women and children, are exposed to every danger, including exploitation and abuse. Therefore, along with military action, an appropriate humanitarian response must be provided in confronting numerous challenges, including, among others, migration owing to the security crisis; the specific protection needs of refugees and displaced persons, who number in the millions; and the food insecurity and near-famine conditions that are rampant in the Sahel and areas at the centre of the security threat caused by Boko Haram.

In that regard, my delegation commends the various activities carried out in response to the acute humanitarian needs of the people, recalling the need to harmonize initiatives and for ongoing cooperation among the relevant actors. From that perspective, my delegation welcomes the regional dialogue on protection held in Abuja from 6 to 8 June, at the conclusion of which the participants representing the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, with international partners and numerous non-governmental organizations, adopted measures aimed at providing additional protection and assistance to the population of the Lake Chad Basin region. The tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, signed on 9 June by the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria and the regional representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which deserves to be commended.

My delegation underscores the challenges associated with funding and calls for greater mobilization to bridge the gap, which remains considerable, with only 22 per cent of the necessary funds having been received. That is why my delegation has echoed the appeal made by our two briefers this morning, as well as by our colleague from the United Kingdom, for the $250 million pledged to the Multinational Joint Task Force to be quickly disbursed, and above all for more be done to balance the $723-million budget proposed by the countries of the subregion.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting on the continuing, ever-more urgent crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, which, as others have noted, deserves greater attention from the Security Council and from the broader international community. I thank Under-Secretaries-General Feltman and O'Brien for their briefings and efforts, and those of their teams, to help tackle the significant security and humanitarian challenges in the region. Mr. O'Brien knows the region better than most after a lifetime of dedication to its people, and I think that his personal commitment is deeply appreciated and very moving.

In April, at the request of President Obama, I led a United States Government delegation to Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria to meet directly with those leading the efforts to counter Boko Haram and respond to the humanitarian disaster that it had created, as well as of course to hear from the communities directly affected by the group's horrific violence. Our delegation included representatives from a range of United States military, humanitarian, political and economic agencies, reflecting our understanding of the comprehensive approach that is needed to defeat Boko Haram in an enduring way and prevent another group like it from emerging in its place.

As part of the trip, we visited camps of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees displaced by Boko Haram. Virtually everyone whom we met had a horror story of having seen homes looted and burned, men and boys murdered, and women and girls raped and abducted. A 14-year-old girl whom I met in a camp in Cameroon told me that when Boko Haram came to her village, one of the fighters told her, "Either you marry me and become my slave, or I will kill you and the rest of your family". This girl became a slave so that her family could live. Imagine a child being forced to make a decision like that. The girl eventually managed to escape her captors, but she will carry the trauma and, perversely, the guilt that she suffered for the rest of her life.

As we all know, atrocities like these persist. On 3 June, for example, Boko Haram attacked a security outpost in the Niger's Diffa region, reportedly killing 24 security personnel and wounding 111 more. More than 50,000 people were displaced as a result, many of whom were already IDPs or refugees. On 29 June, a young boy reportedly blew himself up in the town of Djakana, Cameroon, killing 11 people who had gathered after breaking the fast during Ramadan.

I would like to discuss briefly the security and humanitarian efforts that we need to vanquish this monstrous group. It goes without saying that a robust military effort is critical. Because Boko Haram has demonstrated its ability to move back and forth across international borders, Governments of the region must be able to seemlessly coordinate their efforts to pursue the terrorists across those same borders. That does not always come easily, and it has been very challenging in that region, but the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is playing a growing role in improving such coordination, as well as in planning and intelligence sharing. Those efforts have produced important gains in recent months, including the freeing of thousands of hostages, destroying dozens of terrorist camps and — this is worth stressing — recovering approximately 75 per cent of the territory that Boko Haram once controlled. Those gains must be preserved, and that requires the international community's supporting and shoring up any weak link in the security posture of the region.

While members of the Council and United Nations Member States unanimously agree that Boko Haram constitutes a threat to international peace and security, unfortunately few are supporting the countries on the front lines of this fight. We applaud the European Union and the United Kingdom for their contributions to the MNJTF. For its part, the United States is supporting the MNJTF and its members with advisers, intelligence-sharing, logistic support, training and non-lethal equipment totalling more than $71 million of assistance, as well as providing $40 million through the Global Security Contingency Fund for training and equipment to help our partners enhance border security. We urge more Member States to step up and support that effort.

To be effective, those military efforts must respect human rights, as the Council importantly underscored

in its presidential statement S/PRST/2016/7, adopted in may on efforts to counter Boko Haram. When Government security forces round up civilians on nothing more than suspicion, use torture to try to extract information, apply scorched-earth tactics or stand by as vigilante groups carry out mob justice or commit any other abuses with impunity, they alienate the very civilians whose support and cooperation is crucial to combating Boko Haram effectively.

As we continue to strengthen the military effort against Boko Haram, we also have to do much more to address the region's dire humanitarian situation — and I stress the word, "dire". As we heard from Under-Secretary-General O'Brien, an estimated 2.5 million people have been displaced within their countries by Boko Haram, while some 150,000 have been pushed beyond their borders. More than 90 per cent of IDPs in the region have been taken in by family members or communities — a testament not only to the tremendous generosity of the people of the region, but also to the huge strain that has been placed on them. A security guard at a university I visited in Yola, Nigeria, had at one point taken in more than 50 members of his extended family who had been displaced by the violence. He is a national hero, and there are tens of thousands of such heros across the region. We therefore have Boko Haram unleashing this true evil, an evil that has seen them pioneering the theft of children and the use of young girls as suicide bombers. But, alongside that evil, we have seen such unbelievable altruism and goodness. I think we of greater means should all be inspired by those heros to do much more.

The situation in the camps is as dire, as we have heard. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) recently was able to reach the city of Bama in Borno state, Nigeria, which aid workers have been unable to reach for two years due to insecurity. It is home to approximately 10,000 people. MSF found that 15 per cent of the children there were suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and nearly 1,500 people had to be evacuated. Most chillingly, when the group arrived, they found 1,233 graves near the camp, which had been dug in the last year; 480 of those graves appeared to belong to children. And camp residents told MSF of 40 deaths in Bama in the first three weeks of this month due to starvation and treatable illness. Those are the camps we can reach. In the parts of Bormo, Nigeria. Lake Chad and Diffa, the Niger, that are unreachable, one can only imagine how infernal the conditions likely are.

Yet despite that overwhelming need, the $535 million in humanitarian appeals for the affected countries, as we have heard, are grossly underfunded. In Nigeria, only 28 per cent of the appeal has been met, in Cameroon the figure is 22 per cent and in Chad only 17 per cent. We have provided more than $253 million in humanitarian assistance to countries in the Lake Chad Basin in the past two years. We, like the United Kingdom, are considering now what more we can do — because the situation demands it. More countries need to step up immediately.

In addition to strengthening those military and humanitarian efforts, we also need to address the chronic problems that helped to fuel Boko Haram's rise in the first place, and which, if left unaddressed, will lead to further instability and insecurity. That is my final point. We have to play the long-term game in countering violent extremism. That means investing more in the education of young people from marginalized communities, which can open up opportunities that provide a brighter path than the one offered by terrorist groups who exploit marginalization. It means building law-enforcement bodies that are actually accountable to the communities they serve and work to earn their trust. It means amplifying the voices of religious leaders who condemn terrorism and seek to exercise their faith in moderate and peaceful ways. It means rooting out the rampant corruption that has long siphoned away resources from the people who need it most, and fostering inclusive institutions that serve all people, rather than one group at the expense of another. That is a daunting agenda. And one of the challenges we face now is that we have to simultaneously tackle those root causes and address this agenda at the same time that we keep people alive in the here-and-now who desperately need our humanitarian support.

Let me conclude. It just so happened that the delegation that I led to the region coincided with the two-year anniversary of the abduction of 276 Nigerian schoolgirls from the town of Chibok. As everyone present here knows, all but one of those girls are still missing, presumably held by Boko Haram. I had an opportunity to meet with eight girls who were taken captive on the awful night in April 2014 when their school was overrun. Herded into open-roof trucks, a few of the girls managed to escape by actually clinging to the branches overhead as the trucks were being driven away from the school. A few of the other girls I met escaped because one of the trucks mercifully broke

down and a number of girls jumped out of the backs of the truck. The girls I met were studying at the American University of Nigeria in Yola, where they had been given scholarships. Those were girls who, prior to their abduction, had not completed secondary school. Now they are taking accelerated courses to prepare them for the lives ahead. Eight young women, along with 16 other Chibok girls, were studying for a university degree, and they were pursuing a range of professions. All spoke ambitiously and idealistically about studying medicine, engineering or accounting. All of them shared something very important in common: they were determined to go back to Chibok and help rebuild their community. One of the young women told me, "We want to make the world proud". Think of the profound character of a group of young women who, after being taken from their classrooms in a dangerous area where they just wanted to complete their exams, taken in the dead of night by Boko Haram, now are determined as ever to go back to that community and who just want to make the rest of us proud. I have no doubt that these girls will, as will so many other young men and women in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. If only, we help empower them to do so.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Japan and the United Kingdom for having convened this informative briefing. I also thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien for having shared with us his assessment of the situation in the region in the wake of his May visit, and in particular for sharing his recommendations as to how we avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in that region. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing in the area of security, and specifically on the progress made and the challenges that still lie ahead in the fight against Boko Haram.

I am not going to repeat the chilling information that we have already heard. I think that we are all very aware of the extreme gravity of the situation. For my part, however, I would initially like to make two comments.

The first is that the humanitarian crises in the Lake Chad Basin happen so often not that they are becoming a chronic phenomenon. If those humanitarian crises are no longer timely, the response of international cooperation must also not be timely. That is why emergency humanitarian aid should be combined with development activities that promote the resilience of the region.

The second comment is that the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin requires a comprehensive response, as it is the result of a combination of factors: fragile State authority with limited control of the territory, poverty, migration, climate change, terrorism and violent extremism, among other factors. I would like to focus on those issues.

First, with regard to violent extremism, many delegations have already referred to the fight against Boko Haram through the Multinational Joint Task Force. Spain also joins in recognizing the efforts being made by Chad, Cameroon, theNiger and Nigeria in that regard. We also echo the call for closer regional cooperation to combat this terrorist group. I would also like to point out the importance of ensuring that those operations take into account the specific protection needs of women and girls. It is crucial to provide medical and psychosocial services for survivors. It is also important to dismantle the trafficking networks, as women and girls often end up as victims. Guaranteeing security in and around the camps for internally displaced persons is also important. As has already been stated, military actions are not enough. There also needs to be a relevant component in the fight against violent extremism, which fuels the terrorism threat. Boko Haram substantiates its acts with rhetoric that squarely opposes education and fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly of women and girls. Winning the communication and awareness-raising battle — especially with regard to youths — in order to counter terrorist groups is a pending task.

The second issue to which I would like to refer is climate change. During our meeting on the challenges in the Sahel region (see S/PV.7699), convened barely two months ago under the Egyptian presidency, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ibn Chambas identified climate change as being one of the main challenges confronting the region. Lake Chad is disappearing, thereby exacerbating the already very difficult conditions being experienced by the people of the region. That is causing forced internal displacement and migration and compounding threats such as terrorism, organized crime and violent extremism. In that regard, I would like to draw attention to the interesting proposal made by the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to analyse whether the effects of climate change worsen the fragility of certain populations and whether they are making them even more vulnerable to violent extremism and

recruitment by terrorist groups. That seems quite timely to us when it comes to the area we are discussing, namely, the Lake Chad Basin.

Migration is the third issue I want to discuss. One of the consequences of the terrorism perpetuated by Boko Haram is the tragedy resulting from the massive displacement of populations, with the parallel emergence of camps with enormous needs for basic services. Many of the displaced opt to migrate, often becoming victims of human trafficking networks. As proof of that challenge we need only look to the thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and the desert, including as well the exisitng links between terrorism and trafficking in migrants.

I would like to conclude by saying that today's meeting is a good example of how early-warning mechanisms are functioning correctly. The Security Council is being informed in a timely manner about the situation the region, and on recent occassions it has expressed itself on the matter — the most recent being on the eve of the security summit held in Abuja in May. Nevertheless, if we want to change the course of events, there will have to be greater political will the part of everyone. Early warning will serve little purpose if it is no accompanied by an early response.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for their briefings.

The countries of Central and West Africa have recently further strengthened their cooperation on security, and the overall situation in the region is stable. The countries of the Lake Chad Basin have established the Multinational Joint Task Force and intensified their fight against terrorism, making significant progress in that regard, for which China expresses its appreciation. The security problem and the humanitarian situation in the region remain very serious, however. Repeated terrorist attacks and rampant criminal activities, such as piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, pose a threat to the security and stability of the region.

The international community should support the countries of Central and West Africa, including the countries of the Lake Chad Basin region, in the following areas.

First, they should support African countries in their counter-terrorism efforts, which constitute a very important component of international counter-terrorism efforts. The international community must actively support and assist the countries of the region in their capacity-building to fight terrorism, enabling the Multinational Joint Task Force to effectively conduct its operations to eliminate the threats to the countries, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin, posed by terrorist organizations and activities.

Secondly, there must be greater cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The international community must fully respect the leading role played by regional organizations in addressing the region's problems, and draw on the unique expertise and advantages of those organizations with a view to building synergies and promoting solutions to regional hotspot issues through such methods as dialogue, mediation and good-offices.

Thirdly, humanitarian aid should be provided to the region as soon as possible. The international community should adhere to the purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as established by relevant General Assembly resolutions, and actively provide humanitarian assistance to the countries concerned based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, in order to mitigate the food shortage and insecurity facing regional countries.

Fourthly, countries of the region must also be provided assistance so that they can achieve development by addressing the root causes of conflict. The international community should also increase its financial assistance to those countries on the basis of respect for their national sovereignty so that they can truly build their capacities to promote economic and social development.

China has always actively supported Africa in capacity-building, abiding by its policy of sincerity, good faith and friendship towards Africa, characterized by prioritizing justice over interests. During the Chinese presidency in April, we took the initiative to hold an open debate of the Security Council on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (see S/PV.7675), which resulted in presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, in which the Council offered a positive response to the aspirations of the regional countries for international cooperation in combatting piracy, thereby building an international

consensus on fighting piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, offering a new approach to a collective response to the piracy issue.

China will continue to implement the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit and the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, and is ready to work with the international community and countries concerned to support the countries of Central and West Africa in their efforts to achieve lasting peace and common prosperity.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their comprehensive briefings, as well as the United Kingdom delegation for requesting this meeting.

The humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin continues to destabilize the entire West Africa region. The food security and nutritional situation in the area is next to disastrous. Extreme poverty, interethnic and intercommunal tensions, climate change — all these factors contribute to the sad state of affairs. People living in insecure areas continue to face the deterioration of their livelihoods, including farming and fishing. In addition, during the past decade, the rise of violent extremism complicated an already dire situation in the region.

In that regard, Ukraine fully supports all international initiatives aimed at the stabilization of the region. The regional efforts to address all key conflict drivers must also be strongly encouraged. Humanitarian aid has to be delivered wherever it is needed most, especially for those most vulnerable, including displaced persons and refugees, in host areas and areas inaccessible to humanitarian programmes. Borno state in Nigeria, which hosts more than 1 million internally displaced persons, is one of the vivid cases in point here. This endeavour requires substantial funding from the international donor community. Unfortunately, as we have just heard, only 28 per cent of the United Nations humanitarian response plan for the Lake Chad Basin has been financed so far. We therefore encourage donors to support United Nations efforts in this respect.

International assistance will not be effective if we do not provide a proper response to the major threat to the region, that is, Boko Haram. As was rightly mentioned by today's briefers, Boko Haram's activities undermine the international community's and regional efforts to take forward the recovery of the countries affected.

Confronting the Boko Haram threat in the countries of the Lake Chad Basin requires the adoption and subsequent implementation of coherent national programmes aimed at combating violent extremism. In that light, we commend the results of the second Regional Security Summit, held on 14 May in Abuja, which helped to better evaluate and prepare the regional response to the threat posed by this terrorist group.

We call on the United Nations Secretariat to support these regional efforts as much as possible, in particular through the relevant United Nations Offices in Africa, including the enhancement of cooperation with the Multinational Joint Task Force in developing and strengthening strategic communications among the intelligence and counter-terrorism authorities of the States affected.

We are also looking forward to the planned visit to the Lake Chad Basin States by the Counter-Terrorism Committee in October this year. In our view, it should be aimed first and foremost at elaborating the further steps required for strengthening and promoting cooperation between the international community and the region so as to assist it in countering terrorism, including through the development of a relevant regional comprehensive strategy.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I join earlier speakers in welcoming our discussion today on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin, which we, too, feel is timely, and we thank the United Kingdom for having requested it. This discussion, in my view, could also set the stage for the wider conversation on peacebuilding in Africa that the presidency will convene tomorrow.

I wish to add my voice to those expressing appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their respective briefings, which shed much light on the situation there. Earlier speakers touched on the security and humanitarian challenges faced by the region and on possible responses by the international community. With a view to contributing to the discussion, I intend to focus my statement on similar themes, but I also intend to focus on the theme of the protection of children in the Basin area.

Malaysia shares the concerns expressed by Council members on the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation of the roughly 50 million inhabitants of the wider Basin area, which straddles Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Nigeria. On the security front, my delegation

notes that the civilian population of the Basin is doubly impacted, first by the worsening humanitarian situation, which results partly from both climate and human factors, and, secondly, by the security threat posed by violent extremists, particularly Boko Haram.

Clearly, Boko Haram has played a role in exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin, and we recognize the needs of the population. We support the call made and encourage donors not to overlook but instead support the humanitarian response to the region. The fact that Boko Haram retains the capability to launch large-scale attacks and undertake complex ambushes and is fairly proficient with improvised explosive devices, as well as its pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Da'esh, give rise to much concern, not least because the humanitarian situation of the civilian population in the Basin area is already vulnerable and precarious.

In this connection, Malaysia is pleased to note that the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), established last year by the Lake Chad Basin Commission member States and the African Union, has been operationalized and is undertaking active operations against Boko Haram. Apart from the MNJTF operations, we also welcome the various other measures undertaken by the countries in the region to prevent attacks and reduce civilian targets. The improved coordination and intelligence-gathering among the MNJTF authorities that allow for successful pre-emptive operations are also commendable.

It is striking to note that nearly one of every five Boko Haram suicide bombers is a child; almost three quarters are girls, as highlighted by UNICEF in its most recent report. This is utterly abhorrent. Despite the criticism levelled at it, the MNJTF is a concrete example of what concerted political will and military action, coupled with regional solidarity, cooperation and resolve, can achieve.

In combating the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism, all parties must continue to adhere to international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We fully understand, however, that in order to ensure its continued functioning, the MNJTF requires the predictable and sustained provision of necessary resources. We support the call for States and other partners in a position to do so, including those from the region, to positively consider meeting such needs. The protracted situation of insecurity, instability and lack of socioeconomic development in the Basin area continues to expose the exceeding vulnerability of the civilian population, particularly of women and children, boys and girls.

In this regard, I wish to highlight the deplorable and unacceptable situation faced by children at the hands of Boko Haram. Since 2013, at least 1.3 million children have been uprooted or displaced as they seek to flee the violence. Among the key losses suffered is access to education and to health care. Loss of access to education is particularly worrying. Left unchecked, the large number of uneducated and idle youth provide a pool of potential recruits not just for terrorists but also for other armed criminal groups, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence in an already insecure and unstable region. As such, we stress the importance of ensuring that all children, including and especially displaced children in the affected areas, continue to receive an education.

Malaysia condemns in the strongest terms the practice of abducting children for recruitment and using them as combatants or human shields by terrorists and other parties to conflict in the region. Such practices constitute grave violations against children for which the perpetrators must be held to account. These children and the many others who are hidden within the ranks of the group are victims of Boko Haram's inhuman and ruthless tactics. We encourage the MNJTF authorities to provide special protection for children associated with Boko Haram. We condemn on equal terms the abduction of women and girls, who are then subjected to sexual violence and forced marriage by the group, as appalling and unacceptable.

Moving forward, we wish to flag the concern that even upon their release or separation from Boko Haram, children face serious challenges in getting their lives back. They are often stigmatized by their own communities. We wish to stress that in such situations, children must primarily be seen as victims who deserve treatment and support for their eventual reintegration into the community. They should not have to suffer being ostracized and shamed.

By way of conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to working effectively with all partners and stakeholders in a coordinated and concerted manner, with a view to collectively addressing the dire situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Stephen O'Brien for their briefings this morning regarding the humanitarian and security situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

We remain concerned about the security situation there as well as the humanitarian crisis that has engulfed that region for several years now and which, despite the progress made by the countries of the region in recent months, continues to affect millions of people, owing both to the impact of extremists, who use appalling tactics to sow fear among the population, and to all of the socioeconomic factors that have historically affected the countries of the region. Food insecurity, poverty, exclusion, drought, transnational organized crime and the clashes between local communities, in addition to the threat posed by the terrorist group Boko Haram, responsible for forced displacement and great instability, have undermined the normal development of a region with great human and economic potential.

In that connection, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela once again emphatically condemns the acts carried out by the terrorist group Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, which represent grave attacks against the peace and security of the people of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and the Niger in recent years, and which exacerbate the already fragile situation, particularly the humanitarian aspect.

It is absolutely reprehensible that the actions of that terrorist group include the abduction of children, young people and women, and the destruction of educational facilities and other civilian infrastructure. In that regard, we have been and will continue to be unwavering in our support of all Council initiatives to promote a sustainable solution to this terrorist threat. The most recent initiative was presidential statement S/PRST/2016/7, of 13 May, which reaffirmed the commitment to decisively fight terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations.

We wish to express our solidarity with the victims of Boko Haram's criminal actions, and we demand the immediate and unconditional freeing of all abducted people that are still captive, including those who are victims of forced recruitment.

The humanitarian calamity affecting the region should be the cause of great concern and immediate attention, especially considering the massive numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees who have fled their homes to save their lives. According to the latest reports from United Nations specialized agencies, the number of persons internally displaced over the past year exceeds 70,000, with almost 7,000 refugees. As can be expected, the situation does not allow the victims to lead a full and peaceful life, and they are deprived of their most fundamental rights to basic services, education and culture. Moreover, this undermines at all levels the ability of the subregion and the countries concerned to respond.

At a time when humankind faces significant humanitarian challenges, crises such as the one in the Lake Chad subregion, which in some cases have less media coverage, fall squarely on this Organization and the international community, and they must receive increased attention. It is crucial for the various sectors of the international community that have pledged financial resources to this issue to fully keep their commitments with a view to addressing and solving the humanitarian and development challenges.

The efforts spearheaded by countries in the region in order to effectively address the situation and facilitate humanitarian access in this risky environment are laudable, as are the efforts of various United Nations entities and international organizations to provide assistance and relief to the victims of these crises. Similarly, we welcome the efforts of Nigeria, Chad, the Niger and Cameroon, through the Multinational Joint Task Force, to fight Boko Haram. We commend their achievements in recent months, which has resulted in greater stability in the region. We wish them continued success in their coordinated efforts in all areas to combat the security threat.

The regional security summit held in Abuja on 14 May was an appropriate forum to reaffirm the political commitment of regional and international players to strengthening their joint security strategy aimed at curbing the spread of terrorism. We hope that its results are duplicated and lead to concrete improvements.

In that connection, all solutions to the scourge of terrorism must be consistent with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples. As part of the effort in addressing the terrorist threat to international peace and security, we consider the role of public policy to be essential as an engine of social stability. Consequently, we encourage the countries in the Lake Chad region to continue making

efforts to promote inclusive educational, economic and political Government strategies for sustainable development. That is why it is urgent to strengthen State capacities at all levels, including regional and local levels, in order to prevent and combat the causes of the security threats. The efforts of the countries in the subregion must be accompanied by the decisive support of the United Nations and its agencies.

The work of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in various areas to counter the actions of Boko Haram have been of great value, and we believe that, with the leadership of affected countries and the support of the international community, there should be coordinated strategies to prevent, combat and eliminate this threat to international peace and security.

Finally, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms that the ultimate defeat of terrorism cannot be based solely on military action. We must make progress in addressing the structural elements of poverty that drive the emergence and spread of violence. Otherwise, military victories on the battlefield will not guarantee sustained peace.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for convening this meeting on an issue of great importance, namely, the situation in the Lake Chad Basin. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for their detailed and illuminating briefings.

Just over two weeks ago, the Security Council heard Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, deliver a briefing here in the Chamber on the latest report (S/2016/566) of Secretary-General on his Office (see S/PV.7735), during which he highlighted the precarious humanitarian and security environment in the Lake Chad Basin. Uruguay's brief statement on this issue does not reflect any intention to understate the impact of this crisis, for given the multidimensional nature of these problems, we could clearly explore these issues at much greater length.

Uruguay takes a comprehensive approach to the crises in this region, considering that the situation has devolved to its present state due to the sum of a great number of converging elements that are further aggravating existing structural deficiencies. The deplorable security environment, made worse primarily due to the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram, the lack of food and the unmet basic needs of the populations, have led to 2.6 million people to leave their homes forcibly — with 71,718 registered displaced persons in a little over a year and an estimated 43,193 others who have not been registered — which further destabilizes an already fragile region.

We are talking about 2.6 million people who had to abandon everything due to the crisis in the region, 2.4 million people affected by Boko Haram violence and 3.8 million people suffering from extreme food insecurity. For the international community as a whole, these numbers may not seem so significant on a global scale. However, given that the population of Uruguay hovers around 3.5 million, just making that comparison has a meaningful and disconcerting impact on us. The question we must ask ourselves is, What can the international community do to at least ease the crises facing the 21 million people who live in these crisis-affected regions?

First, we must recognize the work of the specialized agencies of the United Nations — the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization, among others — as well as of the Central Emergency Response Fund, which, insofar as their capacities allow them, have tried to meet the most urgent needs of those people. The 90-day emergency response plan is yet another tool that will undoubtedly make a significant difference in the situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

Secondly, we must address the root causes of the crisis: hunger, lack of education, lack of access to safe drinking water, insecurity and lack of medical facilities, among many others. We need sustainable solutions for these populations so that they can build their resilience and adapt to adversity.

With regard to Boko Haram, in addition to its warped or deviant interpretations of religion, it clearly seeks to intstil and exploit fear in its victims. It has also been shown to have strategic interests in the border areas of Nigeria, the Niger and Cameroon, including control over the flow of weapons, human trafficking and trafficking in ivory. We stress the fact that when its members are not engaged in terrorism they operate as common criminals. We need to pursue our strategy against them with all means at our disposal.

Uruguay commends all of the emergency plans and initiatives that have proven to be important instruments of assistance to the populations at risk, but we must also continue to work with the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria to build capacities that will enable them to address the root causes that fuel these crises.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien for their detailed briefings on the military-political and humanitarian situations in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Of particular concern are the ongoing activities of Boko Haram, which continues to undermine stability in Cameroon, the Niger, Nigeria and Chad and threatens many other countries of the continent. We recall that Boko Haram has declared its allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, which has become entrenched in Libya, where chaos and a de facto power vacuum have prevailed for the past five years. That linkage makes it even more urgent than ever to find an urgent, cohesive and robust response to the terrorist threat in Africa. We are also concerned about the new and innovative tactics used by Boko Haram, which avoids direct confrontations with Government armed forces and prefers attackingpeaceful civilians and civilian infrastructure through suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices.

It will be impossible to improve the humanitarian situation, resolve the issue of refugees and many problems linked to the terrorist threat in the region without eliminating the threat posed by Boko Haram. That is evident to us all today and is our highest priority. We note the efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, their Multinational Joint Task Force and Benin, and welcome the results they have achieved. We are convinced that collective action alone can defeat the terrorist hydra in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

We also welcome the positive decision taken at the recent African Union Summit in Kigali to establish an anti-terrorist fund to meet the needs of the continent, which will play an important role in the elimination of terrorism throughout Africa. We also highly commend the measures taken by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations specialized agencies that provide multifaceted assistance to the Lake Chad Basin countries. The most important decisions have been taken and must now be implemented. Russia will maintain its active multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the States of Africa.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): I thank Under-Secretaries-General Feltman and O'Brien for their first-hand engagement and insights on the Lake Chad Basin.

As we have heard, the region faces a range of very serious challenges, including the environmental and economic effects of climate change, lack of development, youth populations that aspire to greater economic and political participation, low commodity prices, and the presence of groups promoting an extremist ideology. We are deeply concerned by the displacement of millions of people across the region, many of whom are women and children, due to the actions of Boko Haram. This has been further exacerbated by the growing number of attacks in the southern Diffa region of the Niger. The large-scale displacement risks fuelling further regional instability, and we agree that a concerted effort is required on resettlement and recovery for those affected.

Mr. O'Brien outlined that there are over 9 million people in need across the Lake Chad Basin region. Boko Haram's continued actions are exacerbating an already difficult humanitarian situation. The disruption of farming and herding activities is contributing to a looming food crisis in north-east Nigeria. Today's meeting is therefore important in highlighting to the Security Council and the international community the sheer scale of the problems.

We welcome the gains made by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the Nigerian army against Boko Haram, including the rescue of over 2,000 abductees and the arrest of key Boko Haram members. We are also encouraged by the enhanced coordination by Governments in the Lake Chad Basin area, including on intelligence-sharing with the establishment of an intelligence fusion cell in N'Djamena in April.

New Zealand supports and encourages regional solutions to regional issues. The MNTJF represents a practical example of a collective, coordinated regional response to a threat that is inherently regional and cross-border in nature.

Ensuring that the MNJTF is adequately financed is critical. It also speaks to a deeper ongoing problem

in the international community's approach to funding regionally led counter-terrorism and peace operations. New Zealand is strongly supportive of African calls for a long-term solution to these financing questions that would provide regional organizations with more stable and predictable funding, recognizing that there also needs to be flexibility in specific cases.

As our briefers have said, this is not just a security issue, and a military response is only part of the solution to defeating Boko Haram. It is necessary to address the conditions that have allowed extremism to take hold in the region, including political and economic marginalization, limited access to education, scarce employment and economic opportunities, and food insecurity.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Japan.

I thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Stephen O'Brien for their important briefings.

The Lake Chad Basin faces growing vulnerability at an alarming scale. Approximately 9.2 million people — a population greater than that of New York City — are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and face violence perpetrated by Boko Haram. That will be compounded by the rainy season and a lean crop intake. Japan is deeply concerned by the situation on the ground, which requires a careful and dedicated response. In addressing this situation, I would like to take up two points.

First, regional military cooperation through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is absolutely vital to the Lake Chad Basin. That regional initiative, through the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), together with national ownership and leadership, plays an irreplaceable role in regional stabilization. Only through effective MNJTF operations can vulnerable communities receive access to humanitarian assistance. Once areas are liberated from Boko Haram insurgents, many other activities can be effectively undertaken in addition to the efforts of the MNJTF.

The second point I would like to underline is that improved livelihoods are equally vital for stabilizing the region. The United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, national Governments and donors must all work together to restore community livelihoods in the long-term while also supporting the immediate humanitarian response. The impact of the violence caused by Boko Haram is wide-ranging. Jobs and local economies are threatened, education and health services have disappeared, community institutions are undermined, and women and children have been major victims. This impact leads to major challenges at the local level. In Diffa, Niger, trade in the local specialties of hot peppers and dried fish remains banned out of concern that profits could fund Boko Haram. Corn growing is also banned over fears that the corn fields could provide safe haven to Boko Haram. Entire community livelihoods are at stake without economic and social development.

Tomorrow, the Council will hold an open debate on peacebuilding in Africa, focusing on institution-building. Communities in the Lake Chad Basin need immediate humanitarian assistance, but extending humanitarian response is no substitute for rebuilding livelihoods and institutions. People require extended State authority, credible governance, improved public administration, and expanded security. The international community must stand ready to support both the region's immediate needs and long-term efforts to sustain peace. Japan is ready to do its part.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations S/PV.7749

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7749th meeting

Thursday, 28 July 2016, 9.45 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Awad
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/566)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.50 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/566)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/566, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank Council members for their valuable contributions to this statement. In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2016/11.

The meeting rose at 9.55 a.m